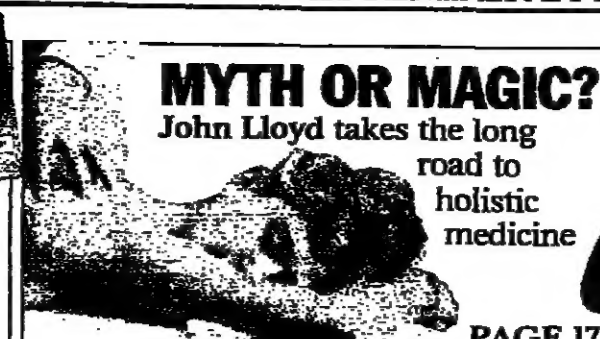




BEHIND THE SCENES
Nigella Lawson wonders why Currie is too hot to handle
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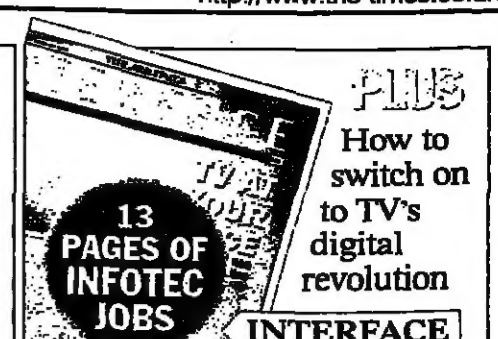
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MYTH OR MAGIC?
John Lloyd takes the long road to holistic medicine
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HOORAY FOR THE CLASS SYSTEM
Michael Gove on the joy of inequality
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How to switch on to TV's digital revolution
13 PAGES OF INFOTECH JOBS
INTERFACE

Death penalty fears for colleague as Saudi court verdict is condemned

British nurse to be flogged over murder

By MICHAEL THEODOULOU, MICHAEL BINYON AND DANIEL MCGRORY

A BRITISH nurse was sentenced to 500 lashes and eight years in jail by a Saudi court yesterday for being an accessory to the murder of a colleague. The verdict raised the prospect that her friend had been convicted of murder, which carries a mandatory death penalty.

The sentence on 31-year-old Lucille McLauchlan was immediately condemned by her family, the Government and human rights groups. Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said that he was deeply disturbed at the sentence, which was "wholly unacceptable in a modern world". He said the Government would put pressure on the Saudis not to carry out the flogging.

Neither McLauchlan nor her co-accused, Deborah Parry, 38, was allowed into the Al Khobar court for the half-hour hearing yesterday at which three judges ruled that McLauchlan should be flogged with a cane in batches of 25 "over a specified period".

British diplomats who were there said that Parry's name was not mentioned. But lawyers for the victim's family said that they had been told that she had been found guilty of murdering the Australian staff nurse Yvonne Gilford and would face the death penalty — although officials insisted that the sentence would not be carried out.

Lawyers were unable to visit the two women in the Dammam Central Prison to tell them about the court's ruling yesterday, but a lawyer



Gilford: stabbed, beaten and smothered

for McLauchlan said that they would probably have heard on the radio or from their guards. "They will obviously be devastated and sick with worry."

Miss Gilford, who was said to have run a usurious money-lending operation at the King Fahd military complex in Dhahran where all three worked, was bludgeoned, smothered and stabbed in her bedroom last December.

The two British nurses confessed to the killing, saying that their victim had gone at them with a knife. McLauchlan told police that she held Miss Gilford down and muffled her cries with a pillow while Parry stabbed her 13 times. But the nurses later retracted their confessions, claiming that they had been made under duress.

Under Saudi law, murder is punishable by beheading and only the nearest male relative of the victim has the right to the sentence being commuted.

Miss Gilford's brother, Frank, has repeatedly refused to waive that right, but there were suggestions last night that he had now done so.

From the start, Saudi authorities have recognised that the case must be handled with extraordinary diplomatic delicacy as they sought to reconcile the conflicting demands of upholding Islamic justice and avoiding any new rupture in relations with the West.

The Saudis have been meticulous in ensuring that the nurses had as much access to lawyers as they would have been had their case been tried in a Western secular court — lawyers do not normally appear for defendants in Saudi courts. The authorities also granted visas to the nurses' parents and kept the British Embassy informed.

To do more — such as allowing Western observers to the trial — would have compromised the nature of Islamic justice in the eyes of most Saudis. And yesterday's judgment was clearly intended to forestall any accusation that Saudi Arabia treats Westerners more leniently than its own citizens. The judges therefore had little alternative but to apply the normal sentence once the women were found guilty. This is, however, only the first stage in an appeal procedure that could take two years. Lawyers for McLauchlan have already told the court that they will appeal.

McLauchlan's parents appeared outside their Dundee home yesterday to urge Tony Blair to apply "maximum pressure" on the Saudi authorities saying they found the court's decision absolutely unbelievable. "They have come to a verdict that can only have been reached on the strength of those forced confessions because there has not been one shred of evidence against either nurse in court. They have not had a trial."



Deborah Parry is believed to have been convicted of murder; her accessory Lucille McLauchlan faces 500 lashes

Saudi sources said that McLauchlan was likely to serve only half her sentence, but there was no precedent for her to be transferred to a British jail. The lashes were likely to be inflicted over a period of months. The Foreign Secretary, how-

ever, said that he was hopeful that the flogging might never be carried out. Mr Cook dismissed suggestions of a diplomatic row with Saudi Arabia over the case, saying: "We are not talking at all about the commercial relationship. We are trying to save a woman from getting these 500 lashes."

Amnesty International also joined the chorus of condemnation, saying: "Flogging is cruel and barbaric and it must not be allowed to happen. The victim is given time to recover then beaten again. They are scarred for life."

In the meantime, Parry's Saudi lawyer insisted that she would be spared because Miss Gilford's brother had agreed to waive the death penalty. Salah al-Hejailan said: "An agreement has been reached with Mr Gilford, signed by him and his lawyers, and signed also by the nurses. That agreement has some terms and conditions that we cannot disclose for the time being, but I must say that all of us are quite pleased and happy with the terms and conditions that have been signed finally after some negotiation in Australia."

Neither of the families nor the Foreign Office knew anything about the deal last night, but the Saudi Ambassador in

London also dismissed suggestions that Parry, who comes from Alton, Hampshire, would be executed. Dr Ghazi Algosabi also said that Mr Gilford had agreed a deal, and he pointed out that both women had three more avenues of appeal. "There will be no question of the death penalty being imposed at any point in the proceedings."

Saudi lawyers for the Gilford family were pleased. "The court has worked long and hard to reach these verdicts. It has been an honour to participate in seeing justice done."

Saudi murder case, pages 2, 3

INSIDE

Ashdown wants a free hand

Paddy Ashdown will today urge the Liberal Democrat conference in Eastbourne not to tie his hands over further links with Labour.

The Lib Dem leader will say that he intends to work more closely with Labour when that would benefit his own party, such as on the constitution, a single currency and Northern Ireland. Page 10

£45,000 award for dyslexic

Pamela Phelps, 23, who left school with a reading age of seven, won damages of more than £45,000 from the London borough of Hillingdon, which failed to diagnose her dyslexia.

She said she hoped to become a computer programmer and would spend the money on her education and taking GCSEs. Page 7

Cook provokes row over UN

Robin Cook got into a spat with a right-wing American senator after insisting that Washington should pay its debt of \$1.5 billion to the United Nations "in full and on time".

A spokesman for Senator Jesse Helms described the Foreign Secretary's comment as "absolutely not helpful". Pages 14, 21

Algerian rebels butcher 85

Muslim rebels butchered at least 85 civilians in the suburbs of Algiers, according to security forces.

However, residents of Bentoumi-Bentahia said that up to 200 were burnt to death or had their throats cut by fundamentalists battling to overthrow the military-backed regime. Page 12



Flying rodent

A BA flight from Johannesburg to London flight was cancelled after a stewardess saw what she thought was a rat on board. Page 5

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Frosty first meeting for Unionists and Sinn Fein

FROM MARTIN FLETCHER, CHIEF IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

ULSTER Unionist Party leaders made history by sitting at the same conference table as Sinn Fein for the first time yesterday, but they emphatically rejected what Gerry Adams called his "hand of friendship".

David Trimble, the UUP's leader, did not shake the Sinn Fein president's hand, speak to him or communicate with him in any way during the long-awaited "Stormont showdown" — the two parties' first encounter at the multi-party peace talks.

He instead sat silently at the opposite corner of the large square table for 45 minutes while his fellow UUP MP, Ken Maginnis, read out a seven-page indictment challenging the British and Irish governments to expel Sinn Fein from the talks. He claimed Sinn Fein was inseparable from the IRA which had rejected the Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence.

The UUP delegation walked out the moment Mr Maginnis

finished. While Sinn Fein responded to the indictment inside the conference room Mr Trimble and Mr Maginnis held a press conference outside in which they denounced Mr Adams and Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein's chief negotiator, as "unreconstructed murderers" and "godfathers of the terrorism that has wracked this province for the last 25 years".

Mr Adams and Mr McGuinness emerged an hour later and said the way the UUP had presented its indictment then "scattered out" to the media without waiting for Sinn Fein's reply was a "sham" and a "charade".

They said they could tolerate such conduct if that was the only way the Unionists could break their old taboo about talking to Sinn Fein, but the UUP now had to stop playacting and begin serious negotiations. This was "a matter of life or death", not soundbites, Mr Adams said.

Dialogue was the only way forward.

Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary, noted this was the first time leading Unionists, loyalists, nationalists and republicans had ever come together in the same room and called it "another step forward", but some commentators compared the meeting to that of James Craig, Northern Ireland's first prime minister, and Michael Collins, father of the IRA, in 1922.

Describing that meeting, Churchill said the two men "glowered magnificently" at each other.

The two governments will almost certainly reject the UUP's indictment today, and Mr Trimble tacitly accepted as much. He insisted that the UUP would remain in the talks process but continue to spurn Sinn Fein.

He suggested it was possible for the UUP and the other parties to achieve a settlement with Sinn Fein's Continued on page 2, col 8

Hague boost for women at polls

By JAMES LANDALE, POLITICAL REPORTER

LOCAL Tory associations could be forced for the first time to include women on their shortlists when selecting parliamentary candidates under radical plans being considered by William Hague.

Although the Tory leader has ruled out the discredited women-only shortlists once favoured by Labour, he has recognised that the party must look at ways of boosting the number of Tory women candidates. One option, employed by the Liberal Democrats, would require local associations to include at least one woman on their lists.

The introduction of positive discrimination in the selection process would amount to an unprecedented switch in Conservative policy and would anger grassroots activists who are protective of their independence to choose candidates without interference from Central Office. They would regard the move as a concession to political correctness.

The proposals appear in the

reform Green Paper, drawn up by Archie Norman, the Tory vice-chairman. It will be published at the party conference in Blackpool.

Senior Tory sources emphasised that a firm decision had not been made but acknowledged that some elements of positive discrimination were being considered. "This is the sort of thing the party needs to discuss," one source said.

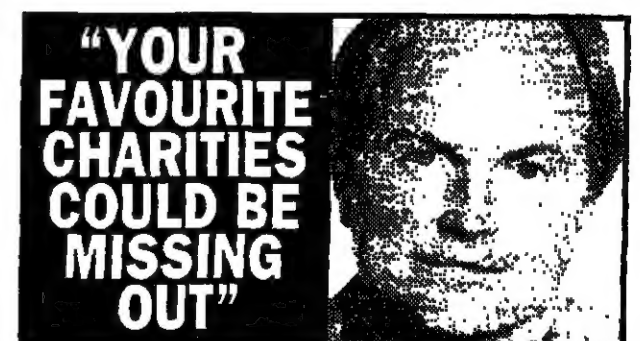
They confirmed that women-only shortlists were not favoured. That former Labour policy, which prevented men representing some constituencies, was declared illegal when an industrial tribunal declared it amounted to sexual discrimination.

Although women form the majority of Tory party activists, they have traditionally balked at selecting women candidates. In 1992, only 63 Tory women candidates were picked, rising to 69 this year. In contrast, Labour fielded 138 women candidates in 1992 and 139 last May.

Computer glitch delays Briton's land speed record bid



Andy Green drives the Thrust supersonic car across the Black Rock Desert in Nevada. Last night's attempt at the land speed record was aborted despite the car reaching 693mph. Page 13 Photograph: David Taylor/ALLSPORT



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NEWS IN BRIEF

HIV immigrant sues council for housing

An illegal immigrant from Brazil who is HIV positive is to sue Brent council in northwest London for refusing to provide him with free housing and food. The man, who stayed in Britain after his visa ran out, is bringing the case after claiming that he was made destitute when his landlord evicted him and because he lost his job when he went into hospital.

The council has refused to provide the unnamed man with food and accommodation because he is not normally resident in the district and he is not entitled to social security benefits because he is an illegal immigrant. The outcome of the case, which will be heard at the High Court later this year, will decide whether other councils, particularly those in the capital, have to fund tourists who have overstayed their entry permit and declare themselves destitute. Both the Home Office and the Department of Health are aware of the case, which was originally taken up by a leading AIDS charity. Both departments are supporting the council's efforts to resist the application.

BBC apologises to Irish

The producers of the soap opera *EastEnders* apologised after more than 150 callers complained to the BBC about the "stereotyped and prejudiced" representation of Irish life in an episode on Monday. It showed a trip by Pauline Fowler, played by Wendy Richard, to meet her long-lost half-sister Maggie in Ireland which one caller to an Irish radio station said showed the Irish as "dirty, drunk or backward".

Fines for idling engines

Motorists will be fined for allowing their car engines to idle unnecessarily under measures to reduce city-centre pollution. A one-year trial will begin next year in Birmingham, Bristol, Canterbury, Glasgow, Middlesbrough, Swansea and Westminster. Fixed penalty tickets of £20 – rising to £40 if not paid within 28 days – will be issued to drivers who refuse to switch off their engines.

Treasure law buried

The law of treasure trove that has governed the discovery of relics for 750 years was consigned to history at midnight. The Government claimed that new legislation – with fines for those not declaring a discovery within 14 days – would better protect finds and end confusion. Treasure, now includes objects more than 300 years old and containing more than 10 per cent gold or silver. Finders may get rewards.

Dangerous restraint

A woman was restrained for up to 50 minutes using a technique that has since been challenged as dangerous, an inquest at York was told yesterday. Zoe Fairley, 21, was held down by the "prone restraint procedure" in a care home in the city by up to four social workers after she attempted to attack one of them in September 1995. They relaxed their grip only when she ceased struggling. The hearing continues.

Freight train derailed

Severe disruption to rail services was caused when a 70mph freight train was derailed, tearing down power lines and ripping up large sections of a commuter line. Eight out of 21 wagons left the track near Chelmsford, Essex, but nobody was injured. Bus services were provided between Chelmsford and Colchester and passengers to Liverpool Street have been told to expect delays for a couple of days.

Confused defendants baffled by court rules

No charges heard and 20 minutes to explain, writes Daniel McGrory

THROUGHOUT their trial Deborah Parry and Lucille McLauchlan sat at the back of the courtroom in Al Khobar bewildered as to what the evidence was against them.

In four months of hearings they were allowed to speak for only 20 minutes and that was to tell how their confessions were coerced by sexual and physical threats from their interrogators after they were stripped. They were never told what they were accused of as under Saudi law the charges are revealed only at the end along with the verdict and sentence. Reports were leaked to the local press by investigating officers hinting darkly about lesbian relationships and money-lending rackets at the King Fahd medical complex but neither suggestion was ever tested, let alone proved, in court.

Sensitive to outside criticism about the fairness of its opaque judiciary, the Saudis were determined to avoid the diplomatic rift that followed the 1980 television documentary *Death of a Princess*, which showed the execution of a Saudi royal for adultery.

Privately Saudi diplomats scorned endless speculation about the women being publicly beheaded, and legal history was made by allowing a prominent Riyadh lawyer, Salah Al Hejailan, to speak on the women's behalf.

The defence team, seized on this opportunity to complain to King Fahd that they were never allowed to contest what they describe as "flawed evidence". Instead the three judges merely studied the reports submitted by the investigation team.

The nurses' families are disappointed that assurances were not kept that the women

would be able to have their say in court. Mrs Anne McLauchlan, Lucille's mother, said "That didn't happen. The girls did not have a fair trial. They did not have any sort of trial at all."

"The families know these girls, they cherish life and could not take it away like this," Miss Parry's sister, Sandra Ashbee, said. "I don't recognise the Deborah the Saudis portray. No one is more caring." No forensic evidence was ever produced proving either of the women were in Miss Gilford's bedroom on the night of December 11 when the 55-year-old staff nurse was beaten, smothered and stabbed 13 times.

The police have never disclosed the precise motive for the killing on December 11. They hinted that Yvonne Gilford misused her position as the senior nurse to withhold salary cheques from her staff thereby forcing them to borrow money from her at exorbitant rates. This has never been confirmed.

At the time of her death she was considering lending a Filipino nurse nearly £3,000. Senior officers later leaked a report to a leading Saudi newspaper that Miss Gilford and Parry were involved in a lesbian relationship which the Briton wanted to end.

The only thing that all three families involved in this murder are agreed on is that none of the women was a lesbian. Detectives allege that Parry went to Miss Gilford's bedroom where a row began. As the argument became more heated they were joined by McLauchlan.

All three women were in the nightclothes and in their disputed confessions one admit-



Frank Gilford, brother of the murdered nurse, with his wife, Laurel. He has demanded the death penalty

Dead woman was 'bullying tyrant'

MANY of Yvonne Gilford's colleagues in Dhahran regarded her with fear and loathing (Daniel McGrory writes). They disputed the image of the 55-year-old staff nurse as having sacrificed her personal life for her career and described her as a tyrant and a bully.

Lawyers for the two Britons spoke to nurses at the King Fahd complex, who told how Miss Gilford withheld their pay cheques so that she might lend them money at exorbitant interest rates, and had demanded sex from some. Days before her death she had confided to a Western colleague that she was scared of some of the security men who guarded the King Fahd complex and ran similar money-lending schemes. Miss Gilford

led to hitting Miss Gilford with a teapot. Police stressed how a broken teapot was found in the room.

Miss Gilford is said to have run to her kitchen where she produced a knife to defend herself. The two Britons are said to have forced her on to her bed where McLauchlan held a pillow over her face to stifle her cries while Parry stabbed her 13 times.

The most damning evidence against the Britons was the allegation that police followed

THE VICTIM

said that she had been threatened by the men.

Brought up on a remote sheep farm in Yunta, 250 miles north of Adelaide, Miss Gilford began nursing in Melbourne and New Zealand before moving to England for five years and then spending 20 years in South Africa. A former colleague, Gay Wiggill, matron of the Brentnurs Clinic in Johannesburg, described her as "an absolutely dedicated nurse who gave her life to her work".

Her only meaningful relationship was in South Africa with Owen Joyce, a businessman. He said they were partners

for more than 20 years. He scorned suggestions that Miss Gilford was a lesbian.

From the moment he heard about Miss Gilford's murder, her brother Frank, 59, has insisted he should have the final say on how her killers should be punished. For months he has been implacable in his demand that he would never show clemency, despite appeals from the Saudis and a letter from the two British nurses. The taxi driver from Jamestown, South Australia, said: "Only death will avenge Yvonne."

Last night Mr Gilford was silent. He is subject to a temporary injunction that prevents him commenting publicly on the case.

known to operate their own money-lending scheme and had warned Miss Gilford not to jeopardise their lucrative sideline. They are said to have forced nurses from the Far East into prostitution to pay back their debts.

Five security guards were arrested days before the two Britons.

All were sacked and one is thought to be related to a member of the team who obtained the confessions from the nurses.

Labour hopes Glasgow expulsions will put an end to Scottish sleaze

By Shirley English and Philip Webster

THE entire leadership of Glasgow City Council faces suspension and four senior councillors are likely to be expelled when Labour publishes the findings of its "votes for trips" inquiry today.

The party's National Executive Committee is expected to take tough action to show Tony Blair's determination to wipe out what is viewed as "old" Labour sleaze in the west of Scotland, party sources say.

Five senior council figures face suspension. They are understood to be Pat Lally, the Lord Provost, Alex Mosson, Deputy Lord Provost, deputy leader Gordon Macdonald, Jimmy Mutter, the parks and recreation convener, and Robert Gould, council leader, who provoked the original investigation by claiming in February that some of his party colleagues traded political support for trips.

The inquiry team began by looking at allegations of "a culture of patronage" which had grown out of tensions over the merger last year of Strathclyde region and Glasgow city. Councillors were said to have exchanged favours for votes, indulged in verbal harassment and intimidation at meetings, and enjoyed chauffeur-driven cars and foreign travel on generous expenses.

Suspension means that the councillors will remain party

members but are banned from holding office. The four councillors facing expulsion are believed to be Deirdre Gaughan, sub-convenor of the licensing board, Elaine Smith, a sub-convenor with special responsibilities for youth on the policy and resources committee, Heather Ritchie and Jim Sharkey. Three other unnamed councillors are still being questioned and further details on the action to be taken against them will be disclosed today.

Everyone on the list, prepared by a team of five investigators from London and Scotland, headed by Irene Murlin, the party's national constitutional officer, will be de-selected and therefore unable to stand in the next council elections.

The 12-page report is also expected to recommend that a new panel be established to vet all expense trips by councillors outside the city boundary, even to Edinburgh or Paisley, and that the Labour Party headquarters in Scotland should introduce a list of candidates for the council elections in two years time. Usually candidates are selected by the party in the local council ward. A review of the Lord Provost's duties and responsibilities aimed at making him more accountable, and a stricter interpretation of

the rules governing declarations of interest are also likely to be recommended.

The report concludes: "Of particular note is the general acceptance of poor standards of behaviour and of the failure of the group leadership to set an example of consistently high standards, of personal and corporate responsibility and discipline."

The allegations range from mis-use of position, bending party rules, and intimidation of council employees. It is believed that Mr Gould might be disciplined for bringing the party into disrepute by making the allegations public.

"This is the toughest action we have ever taken against a local authority in Scotland," a party source said yesterday. "The Labour Party is entitled to expect total commitment to its rules, constitution, aims and principles in all circumstances. The evidence received points to a number of councillors departing from acceptable and requisite standards."

Neither Mr Lally, Mr Gould or Mr Mosson was prepared to comment yesterday. Mr Lally's post as Lord Provost is non-political and therefore Labour does not have the power to take it away. One source said: "New standing orders would have to be introduced by the council for that to happen."

Unionists

Continued from page 1 participation. "We are not going to shirk our responsibilities. We are not going to leave these terrorists in the box seat with Unionism marginalised," he said.

The two governments are also hoping for the passage today of a procedural motion which would at long last allow full-scale negotiations to begin, but that depends on the UUP's co-operation.

Mr Maginnis's indictment consisted not only of republican statements linking Sinn Féin's negotiators to the IRA, but of statements to the same effect by the two governments. He claimed the IRA's disavowal of the Mitchell principles showed it was still pursuing its "Armalite and ballot box" strategy, and said the Labour government was now on trial for having "elevated an evil mafia to a status that would shame any other country in Western Europe".

Seeking to pre-empt the UUP's attack the Sinn Féin delegation had arrived in the morning with half a dozen Catholics whose relatives had been killed by loyalist paramilitaries. They accused Mr Trimble of hypocrisy for working with the political representatives of those loyalist paramilitaries, but Mr Trimble insisted there was "no equivalence" because the loyalists had expressed their remorse in 1994, observed a ceasefire since, and "paid their debt to society".

Challenged to express remorse for republican killings, Mr Adams replied: "Of course I am sorry. Of course I am remorseful. Of course we are seeking to put the failures of the past behind us."

Couple win justice in the long run

By Frances Gibb
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

A COUPLE who turned to Europe to complain that the English courts took too long to settle their dispute won a judgment in their favour yesterday – but found that justice Strasbourg-style grinds even more slowly than in England.

The European Court of Human Rights ruled that Britain was in breach of the couple's human rights for taking too long to settle their dispute on legal costs. But, at four years and six months, the European court took four months longer to resolve Geoffrey and Margaret

Robins's case than did the English courts.

Britain, the judges said, had violated the European Convention on Human Rights which states that all stages of legal proceedings for the determination of civil rights and obligations must be resolved in a "reasonable" time.

Mr and Mrs Robins, who live in London and Crediton, Devon, lost their legal dispute with neighbours over sewerage in a judgment on May 1, 1991, but then faced a battle over a claim against them for costs. The whole process ended in dismissal of their appeal against costs on July 19, 1995, when they

were ordered to pay £10,599. The costs came out of the legal aid fund.

Yesterday's judgment said social security officials had wasted ten months by wrongly believing that the couple had separated, and the British authorities had done nothing for a further 16 months, causing an unreasonable delay.

Yesterday Mrs Robins, a teacher in London, said she did not blame the Strasbourg system for its delays. "Part of the reason is that I did this case all on my own until the very end, when the court rules require you to have a lawyer."

A spokesman for the European court said reforms were on the way.

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THE TIMES
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Relatives claim Saudis lied about a fair trial

BY LIN JENKINS
AND SHIRLEY ENGLISH

THE FAMILIES

THE families of the two British nurses were united last night in their condemnation of the Saudi authorities, which they accuse of breaking a promise that the women would receive a fair trial.

Stan McLauchlan, Lucille's father, showed his indignation when he appeared hand in hand with his wife Ann at the front door of their home in Dundee. He said that Saudi diplomats in Britain had given them repeated assurances that the women's confessions, which the nurses say were coerced from them, would be ignored by the courts.

Instead, he said, the confessions were all the three Islamic judges had studied before reaching their verdicts. At times, he appeared close to losing his temper as he faced the cameras and condemned the sentence of 500 lashes for his 31-year-old daughter.

"This is Saudi justice for you," he said. "Lucille will hear about this listening to the radio in her prison cell. This says everything about the Saudi system."

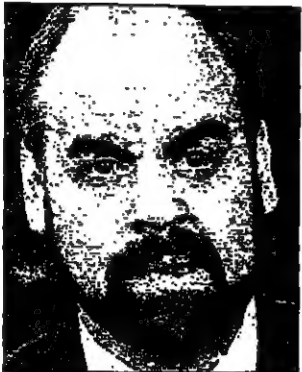
Neither of the families appeared to know anything about a reported "deal" with Frank Gifford, the brother of the murder victim, to waive his demands for the maximum punishment for both women.

Mr McLauchlan called on the Government to honour a pre-election pledge to put human rights at the top of its

political agenda and urgently intervene in the case. His wife kept her head bowed as Mr McLauchlan said: "We find this decision absolutely unbelievable. We cannot understand it for the simple reason that not one shred of evidence has been presented against either of the nurses in court."

"All the assurances that we received from the Saudi ambassador earlier this year, that the nurses would receive a fair trial, that the prosecution would have to prove its case against them and that the confessions, because they were obtained through sexual and physical abuse, would be set aside. They have come to a verdict and it can only have been reached on the strength of these flawed confessions."

Mr McLauchlan, a former union convenor at the Caledonian shipyard in Dundee, said he



Jonathan Ashbee: fears for his sister-in-law

had received news of his daughter's conviction by telephone yesterday.

Deborah Parry's family were last night urgently trying to contact her lawyers and British diplomats in the kingdom after reports that she faced the death penalty. Her brother-in-law, Jonathan Ashbee, left his office as soon as he heard that Deborah was to be beheaded and spent the afternoon making frantic telephone calls.

He appeared relieved by assurances from the Foreign Office that his sister-in-law had yet to be officially sentenced but was clearly concerned that, as the judges were relying on their "forced confessions", that the court might yet demand the death penalty.

He also knew nothing about the reported deal with Mr Gifford to waive the death penalty. He said that he and his wife Sandra, Deborah's younger sister, were "amazed and absolutely stunned" that Miss McLauchlan had been sentenced to eight years and 500 lashes after all the assurances from the Saudi authorities that they would get a fair trial. He said that evidence gathered by the family which he was not yet prepared to release would prove them innocent. He was also anxious that the women's lawyers should see them today to assure them that their legal fight was not yet over.

He said the suggestion from the Saudi Ambassador to London that the victim's brother, Frank Gifford, had waived the right to demand the death penalty for her killers was, he thought, unlikely.

"I refer you to the things he said before when he said there would be a fair trial and the verdict would be based on evidence in court and the confessions would not be relied upon. Perhaps that sheds the best light on what he said."

Mr Ashbee said he was concerned how these reports would affect his children. "We have four small children and they are very frightened."

□ The damage done by 20 lashes of the cane when administered in the way ordained in Arab countries, with the flogger's arm held tightly against his chest so as to keep the Koran tucked in his armpits, would be unlikely to cause lasting physical disability (Dr Thomas Stuttaford writes).

The victim would suffer severe bruising, and the soft skin of a woman might even bleed, but she would not be in danger of the hypovolaemic shock which was the cause of death and lasting renal and cerebral damage in those flogged in earlier centuries.

The punishment inflicted on the nurse will be as much psychological as physical. She will know that even after she has lived through any particular session, the whole process will be repeated again many times.



Ann McLauchlan, fighting back tears, listens outside her home in Dundee yesterday as her husband Stan angrily criticises Saudi diplomats in Britain

Heat and filth take their toll on health

AN IMMEDIATE worry for the two families is whether the women can survive the stifling heat and insanitary prison conditions during the months of legal wrangling they must now endure.

Both are suffering from dysentery and have pleaded with British diplomats to get

THE PRISON

them moved from their overcrowded cells in the Dammam Central Prison. The heat, poor food and overflowing lavatories in the women's wing have taken their toll on their failing health.

Deborah Parry has been given psychiatric help for depression after inmates said that she would wake in the night screaming.

Their families, who have recently visited them, described how the women had to wash by pouring a basin of water on themselves over open sewers. The lavatories were choked with soiled nappies, as many of the inmates had their infants with them.

The only Westerners in the prison have to share their cramped and cockroach-infested cell with up to ten others.

Jonathan Ashbee, Parry's brother-in-law, said: "The stench is unbearable. I don't think they can stand much more. Their resistance has been weakened already and I'm afraid they will get something very serious."

Pair sought refuge from their problems of life in Britain

BY their own admission, Deborah Parry and Lucille McLauchlan went to work at the King Fahd Military Hospital in Dhahran to escape from their problems in Britain.

Deborah Parry, 38, had undergone psychiatric treatment after the sudden deaths of both her parents and of her brother. Her personal relationships had failed and she told her sister that she felt driven to leave Britain to retain her sanity.

At the hospital, Parry quickly befriended Lucille McLauchlan, 31, who was there to escape the disgrace of her blighted career in Scotland. The tax-free salary was higher than they could earn as nurses in Britain. Their companionship was founded on seeking refuge within the strict confines of Saudi society.

The isolation, in a segregated compound, suited Parry as she grieved over a series of family tragedies. In 1979 her 16-year-old brother Keith died in a motorcycle accident just as she was beginning her training. Within weeks, her mother drowned on a boating

THE WOMEN

trip during a holiday that Parry had persuaded her to take to help her recover from Keith's death.

Determined to pursue her career, Parry worked in Oxford and then Worcester. In 1987 her father died from a heart attack, and her brother-in-law died from a brain haemorrhage.

After turning to bereavement counsellors, Deborah Parry decided to leave Britain, and in 1993 started work at the King Fahd Hospital where she was so highly regarded that she was entrusted to the long-term nursing care of a member of the Saudi royal family.

Two years later, she returned to Hampshire, and then helped establish a pioneering unit for post-operative care as a staff nurse at the Kingston Hospital in Surrey where colleagues found her "dedicated, and trustworthy".

Allegations that emerged during the trial that Parry had lesbian inclinations have been vehemently denied. Her sister

said that she had ended a 12-month relationship with a businessman before returning to the Middle East, and that that had followed a 12-year friendship with another man.

Parry blamed the end of her relationship on her continuing trauma over her family. In September 1996 she returned to the King Fahd complex.

McLauchlan's family similarly dismissed the suggestion that she had lesbian inclinations that might be linked to the death of Yvonne Gifford, pointing out that Lucille had been engaged for five years and hoped to save some of her Saudi salary for her wedding.

McLauchlan, born in Dundee, had a single-minded ambition to become a nurse. After leaving school at 17 she began work as an auxiliary nurse at Dundee's Victoria Hospital for the terminally ill. A year later she became a state-enrolled nurse.

A colleague at Dundee's King's Cross Hospital recalls Miss McLauchlan as an ebullient, popular and even-tempered colleague who volunteered to work on the Aids ward. She began a petition to keep the ward open.

McLauchlan was forced to leave King's Cross after being accused of stealing a credit card from a terminally ill patient and swindling him out of £1,740. She denied the charge but was due to appear in a Dundee court weeks after her arrest in Saudi Arabia.

McLauchlan had told her fiancé and her parents that Dhahran offered a lucrative escape. Her mother said: "I don't recognise the person the Saudis are describing. Lucille protects life, not takes it."



Lucille McLauchlan with a Saudi hospital patient

Defence contracts worth billions could be at risk

TRADE

the Saudi Government. It took all the diplomatic skills of Lord Carrington, then Foreign Secretary, to prevent the formal severing of relations.

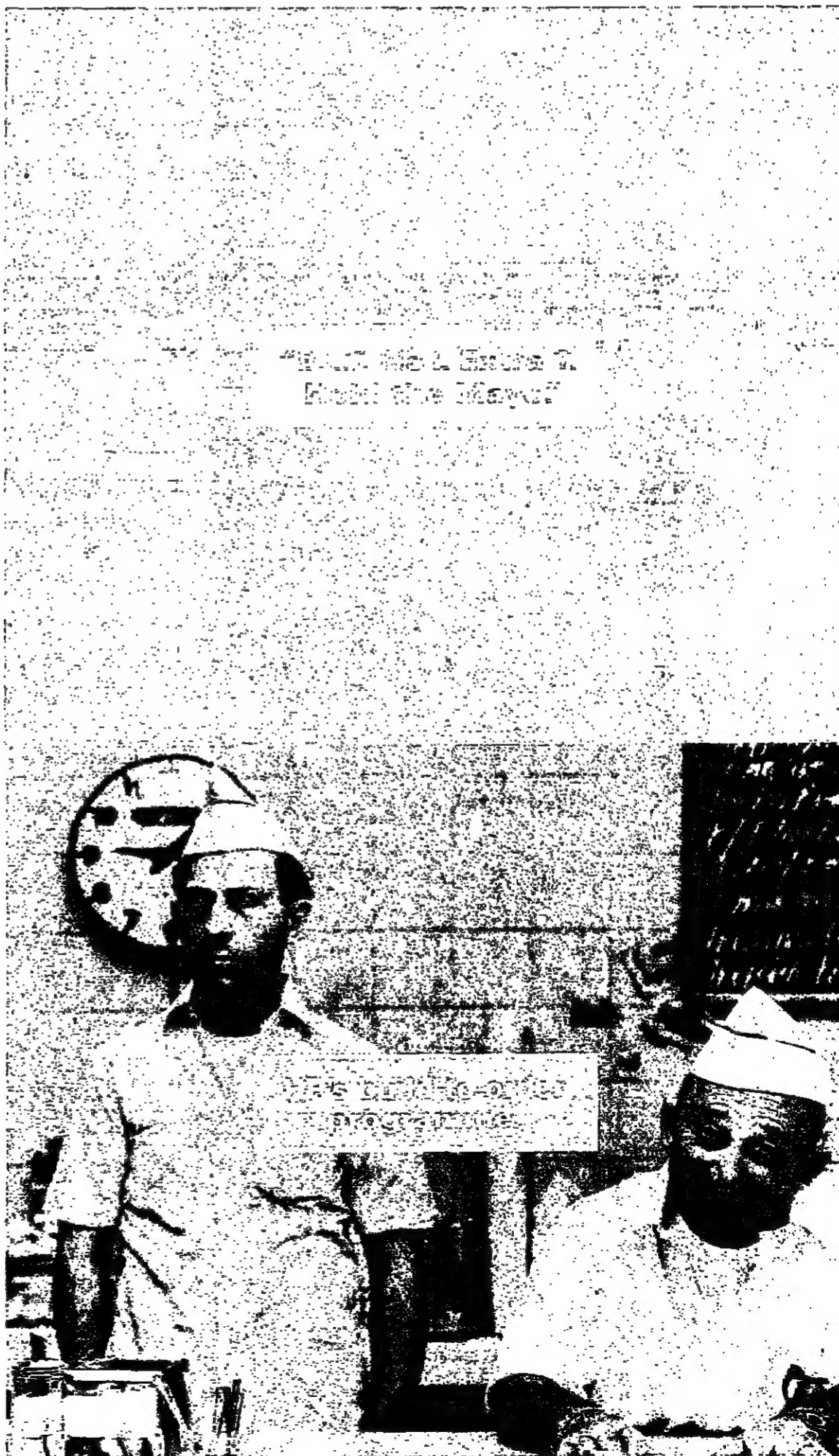
The film highlighted the sensitivities behind a burgeoning trade partnership. Huge exports, not least in the defence field with the £20 billion al-Yamamah contract, are at stake.

The same year as the documentary, a British surgeon and his wife, Richard and Penelope Arnot, were sentenced to a public flogging for alcohol offences at a party, during which Helen Smith, a British nurse, and her Dutch boyfriend fell over a balcony to their deaths. Diplomatic intervention led to their release and the prevention of their flogging.

The Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, and the agreement

between King Fahd and the Americans for a United States-led coalition force based in Saudi Arabia, further cemented the close ties between London and Jeddah. The most recent straining of relations with the Saudis concerned the activities of Muhammad al-Masari, the Saudi dissident in exile. A number of defence contracts were put at risk until the Government decided to expel him to Dominica, although his departure was suspended for four years.

Last year British exports to Saudi Arabia were worth nearly £2.5 billion, including the al-Yamamah deal which on average is valued at about £2 billion a year. Imports from Saudi Arabia for 1996 totalled £752 million. Exports to Saudi Arabia since January have shown a 50 per cent increase up to June. The total figure for 1997 is expected to be about £3 billion.



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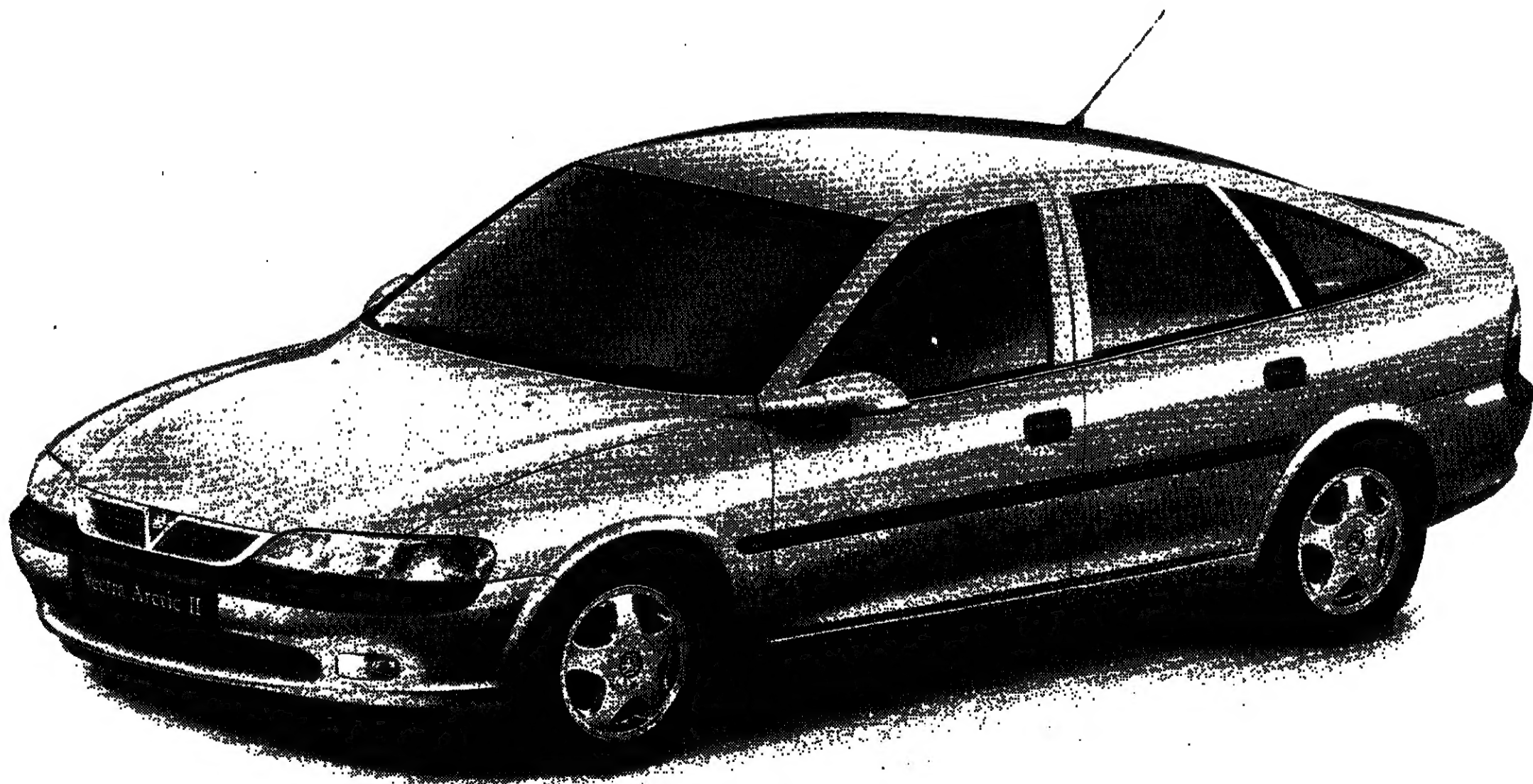
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Stowaway survives leap into treacherous seas

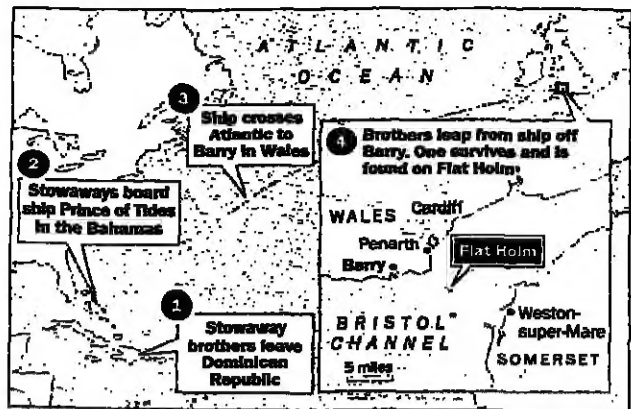
BY SIMON DE BRUXELLES

A STOWAWAY who leapt overboard after being caught on a banana boat from the Bahamas was found hiding yesterday on a tiny island in the Bristol Channel. His brother is feared to have drowned.

Coastguards said that the survivor was lucky to be alive after swimming for half the night in fierce currents to reach Flat Holm, a rocky outcrop three miles off the South Wales coast. He was spotted by a warden of the nature reserve after he had crawled ashore exhausted early yesterday.

Police were making further searches of the island in case his brother, who jumped with him, had made it ashore. Coastguards who spent the night searching were convinced at first that both had drowned in the Bristol Channel, which has one of the fastest tides in the world.

The stowaway was naked when he struggled on to the island, which is about a mile round and is home to five warden and thousands of sea



birds, Kevin Hogan, project organiser of the Flat Holm nature reserve, said: "It was an amazing escape by any standards. He told us he spent at least four hours in the water and he is very lucky to be alive. The ship would have been at least a mile away from us and the currents are very strong indeed."

The brothers, in their twenties and from the Dominican Republic, had stowed away on the 18,000-tonne *Prince of Tides* sailing from the Bahamas to Newport, South Wales.

They were discovered during the six-day voyage by ship's officers, who locked them in a cabin.

On Monday evening the master of the cargo ship, which had moored a mile and a half off Barry, radioed to shore asking immigration officers to collect the stowaways. The officers arrived to find the brothers had forced a porthole and leapt into the sea.

They were assumed to have swum towards the lighthouse on Flat Holm. Coastguards who searched the shoreline at

dawn yesterday found no trace of the pair. At 11am the warden, Elizabeth Robinson, spotted the survivor hiding in a former Victorian isolation hospital for cholera cases.

Mr Hogan said: "He had found an old boiler suit to dress himself in, but was clearly in a very poor state. He had injured a knee and was very weak. We brought him into the farmhouse to give him some tomato soup and some bread. He was very grateful and glad for our help."

The man, who would not give his name, spoke a little English but used his native Spanish to thank the five workers. Mr Hogan said: "He said he hadn't seen his brother since they went into the water and that he had been swimming for about four hours. He seemed like a nice young chap and was in good spirits after having something to eat and drink."

The stowaway was taken off by helicopter for interview by police and immigration officers at Barry police station. A police spokesman said: "He has been examined by a doctor and is in good health."



The son of the 1960s singer Donovan married a Scottish model on the banks of Loch Lomond yesterday. The wedding of Donovan Leitch, clad in a red kilt which he said was the family tartan, and Kirsty Hume took place at St Mackessog's Church, Luss

Children sue over mother's Pill death

BY IAN MURRAY
MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

TWO children are seeking £50,000 damages from a drugs company over the death of their mother after she had taken the Pill.

Through their father, Brian Merrick, the children, Aaron, 9, and Daniel, 7, are suing Schering Health Care under the Fatal Accidents Act, 1976. The company makes Femodene, one of the brands of contraceptive that were said by the Department of Health two years ago to carry increased risks of thrombosis and blood clots.

The family, from Chester, claims that Monica Williams died in 1993, aged 24, as a result of the company's negligence and that it did not give adequate advice and warning about the contraceptive.

A spokesman for Schering said: "The company will defend itself and its oral contraceptive products, which are well tolerated and used effectively by millions of women, both in the United Kingdom and around the world, against any litigation that may occur."

Rat in the aisle forces BA to cancel flight out of Africa

FROM INIGO GILMORE IN JOHANNESBURG

MORE than 200 British Airways passengers were stranded in Johannesburg yesterday when their overnight flight to London was cancelled after a stewardess spotted what she thought was a rat running down the aisle.

The rat—or possibly mouse—was seen while the aircraft was being cleaned after it had arrived in Johannesburg from Gaborone, the capital of neighbouring Botswana. British Airways said yesterday that the delay was inevitable after BA staff failed to locate the rodent.

According to one of the passengers on flight BA 054, they were initially told that the plane had been late leaving Gaborone and then informed in two subsequent announcements that there were problems with the "catering arrangements" before the flight was finally cancelled about 15 minutes after midnight yesterday morning, more than two hours after the scheduled departure time. Until yesterday afternoon there was no official mention of the rodent.

Patrick Kirwan, 27, a British businessman, said: "At around midnight, I went to the BA business class lounge to find out what was going on and I bumped into the flight captain. He told me there was a rat on board, and certain members of the crew had refused to fly. He said they were trying to locate the rat but so far they had had no success."

"I was horrified," Mr Kirwan continued. "I asked whether the flight would still take off and he replied that he thought it doubtful. About 15 minutes later the flight was cancelled but no mention was made of the rat. It's ridiculous. I did not expect this from the world's favourite airline. People were very angry."

BA defended its decision to cancel the flight on the

grounds that the aircraft had to be fumigated and technical checks carried out in case the rodent had chewed through any wiring. "As always our passengers are the first priority," a BA statement said.

The BA statement said: "Wherever possible, passengers with onward connections were rebooked on other flights. Other passengers were accommodated at local hotels."

Rats, mice and other sharp-toothed rodents greatly concern airline health and safety officials. They can gnaw through an electrical cable or control wire in seconds and are capable of spreading disease from one country to another. However, a combination of rapid turnaround times at airports, few obvious ways for rodents to smuggle themselves on board and the introduction of metal, rat-proof containers in which to store food and perishables appears to be deterring them.

Officials from Hillingdon Borough Council, whose Environmental Health Department is responsible for ensuring that Heathrow is kept free of diseases and animal infestations, are called out five or six times a year to deal with rats or mice on board and aircraft—usually spotted in a cargo hold by loaders. "When that happens, the aircraft must be fumigated with methyl bromide, an organic compound which can also be used as a fire extinguisher," said a Hillingdon spokesman.

Most passengers on the BA flight were taken to Johannesburg airport's Holiday Inn and were due to fly to London last night, 24 hours late. They were allowed to make one local call and one brief international call free of charge, but permitted no hard liquor. "After that, we could have done with a stiff drink," one passenger remarked.

Dracula gets stake in the Irish mail

BY AUDREY MAGEE
IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

STAMPS depicting Dracula in ghoulish poses go on sale in Ireland next week to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth in Ireland of Bram Stoker, who created the vampire count.

The four stamps form part of an international "horror" collection and depict him rising from his coffin; preparing to bite the neck of his unsuspecting victim; Lucy Westenra; surrounded by bats in his Transylvanian castle; and hiding in the woods where a bright-eyed wolf lurks in the background.

Dracula is the most famous book written by Stoker who, though he spent most of his life in England, was born in Clontarf, a coastal town north of Dublin city centre, where seminars are



Dracula stamp

held every summer to celebrate his work. The Royal Mail, Canada Post and the United States Post will also next week publish stamps of ghosts and ghouls. The Royal Mail collection includes depictions of Frankenstein's monster, Jekyll and Hyde, the hound of the Baskervilles and Dracula.

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Code of practice to regulate sale of DIY gene tests

COMPANIES which offer genetic tests directly to the public could be blacklisted if they fail to follow proper procedures.

The warning came yesterday from a government committee which has written a code of practice for genetic tests sold "over the counter" or by mail order. So far no abuses had been detected and only two companies were known to offer such services, said Marcus Pembrey of the Institute of Child Health in London, chairman of the sub-group which drew up the code. Professor Pembrey said that some tests would be unlikely to gain the committee's approval. "If somebody told us they were planning to offer tests for the breast cancer susceptibility gene BRCA1, we would have to think very hard," he said. "The danger is that it would be used by women who were secretly worried about breast cancer but hadn't told anybody and had the test and got the

Firms could face blacklisting if they fail to follow rules over advice to patients, writes Nigel Hawkes

answer they didn't want." Such information, in the absence of medical advice and counselling, could be very disturbing, he said. However, the tests offered so far pose less of a dilemma because they are limited to advising couples about their risk of having children with cystic fibrosis.

The code outlined by the sub-group of the Advisory Committee on Genetic Testing is voluntary. The only sanction for those ignoring it is blacklisting in the annual

reports of the committee, but Professor Pembrey believes that is enough. "It would be even more difficult to devise an effective statutory system," he said.

The code, which was yesterday welcomed by Tessa Jowell, Minister for Public Health, lays down standards for confidentiality and good laboratory practice and says that all those buying tests should be entitled to consultations before and after the test to ensure that they understand it and its implications. Tests should not be sold to people under 16. Only tests that are backed with sound clinical data will be approved and a copy of the results should normally be sent to the buyer's GP, although this is not obligatory.

Professor Pembrey said that he expected the private services to be centred around tests for inherited recessive disorders, such as cystic fibrosis. Much more complex ethical issues are raised by tests that indicate an increased risk of a life-threatening disease such as cancer, diabetes or heart disease. Such tests exist, but need careful explanation if the patient is not to be alarmed or falsely reassured. A network of regional genetic centres provides testing paid for by the National Health Service, and the bulk of people requesting tests will take this route.

In America, private genetic testing is much further advanced but doctors are beginning to voice concern. One study, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in March, showed that a laboratory in North Carolina failed to offer proper counselling before testing people for a colon cancer gene, and gave incorrect interpretations of the results in nearly one third of the cases.

Dr Francis Giardello, of Johns Hopkins University, who criticised the tests, said that they showed the potential dangers of allowing tests to become widely available before doctors were properly trained to use them.

Leading article, page 21

Screen yourself by mail order

By STEPHEN FARRELL

PRIVATE genetic testing is provided by two private companies in Britain. University Diagnostics and the Leeds Ante-Natal Screening Service.

Both offer mail-order screening kits for cystic fibrosis, the hereditary lung and digestive disease which usually kills its victims within 25 years. Customers are attracted by advertisements and brochures in doctors' surgeries.

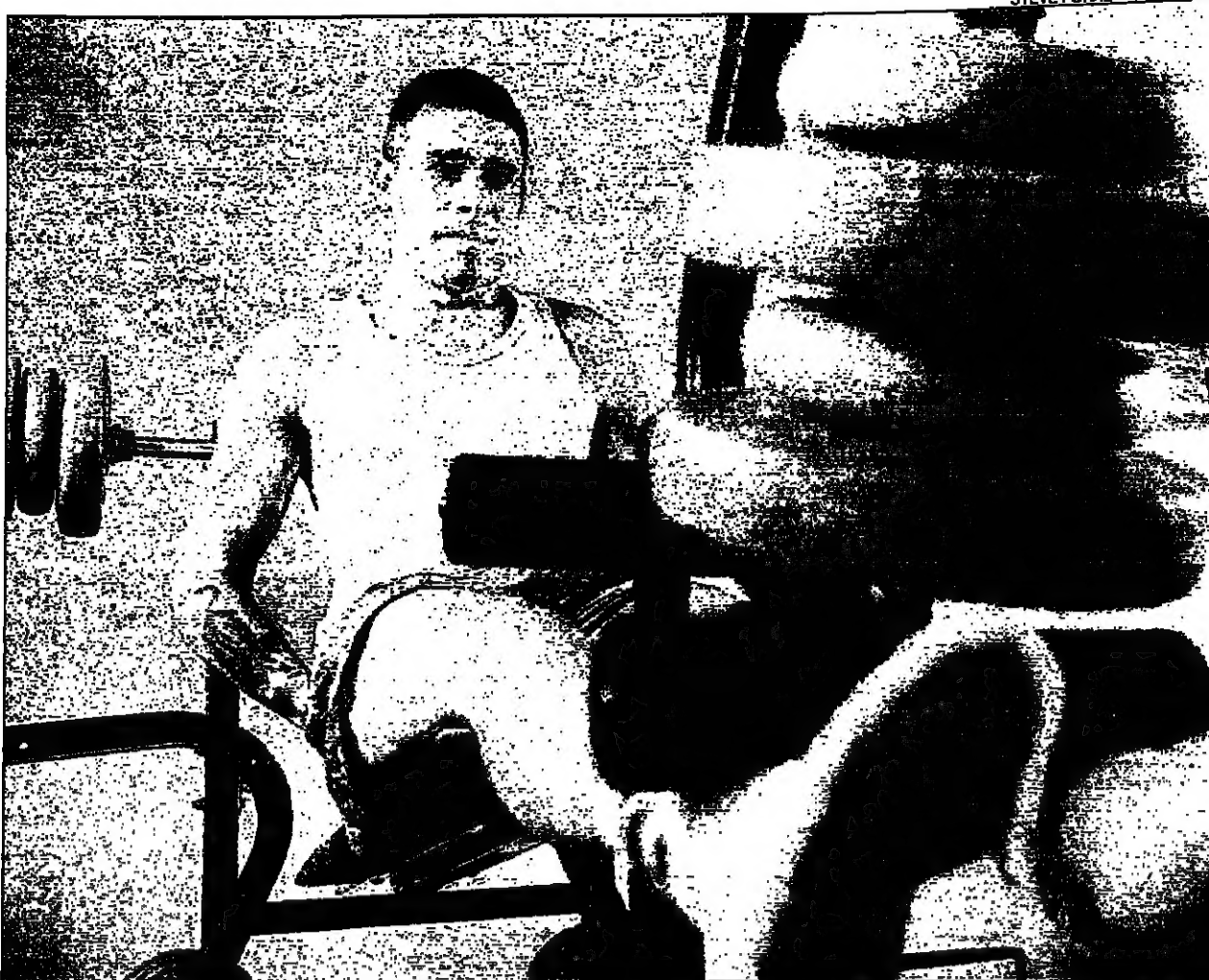
For between £65 and £98 they are supplied with a mouthwash kit to be posted back for analysis. The results determine with 85 per cent accuracy whether they are among two million people in Britain who carry the gene responsible for the disease.

University Diagnostics was founded nine years ago at University College London. It has a £1 million turnover, performing immigration test-

ing for the Government and offering independent forensic DNA expertise for defence lawyers. It has tested 1,000 people since launching its cystic fibrosis kits a year ago.

Dr Paul Debenham, the managing director, said he would have no problems with the code of practice and predicted a huge long-term expansion of DNA testing to cover osteoporosis, adult-onset diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

The Leeds Ante-Natal Screening Service is part of Leeds University and all its £10,000 annual profits go to research. It screens 200 patients a year, charging £88 for Down's syndrome biochemical tests, £98 for genetic cystic fibrosis screening and £128 for a combined test. The company aims to provide services not available elsewhere.



Graham Ward follows a fitness regime, but army doctors say that his health not in good enough for re-enlisting

Ex-soldier caught in medical crossfire

By MICHAEL EVANS
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

A FORMER soldier has been told that he cannot re-enlist in the Army because he is permanently disabled — but is too fit to qualify for a disability pension.

Graham Ward, 25, wants to re-enlist in the 1st Battalion, The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire. But he has been registered by an army orthopaedic consultant as permanently disabled after a knee injury during his earlier army career.

Yet the Disablement Board of the War Pensions Agency, which had awarded him a pension, has withdrawn it because

doctors consider him to be "100 per cent fit". Mr Ward has until December to prove to the Army that his medical assessment is wrong, because then he will be 26, the maximum age for recruits.

Mr Ward, who works for a security firm and runs three miles every morning, has been classed by the army consultant as a PL7 case. "A PL8 case is someone confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life and I'm supposed to be just one level below that," Mr Ward said.

His case has been taken up by a solicitor, Alison Herbert, who said: "Everyone, except this one army consultant, says he is fully fit, including his own doctor." If she is unable to persuade the

Army to reconsider Mr Ward's case, she intends to seek a judicial review.

Mr Ward, from Harrogate, North Yorkshire, joined the Army in 1991. He sprained his left knee during an outdoor army exercise and had to leave. He rejoined in 1993 but the knee was injured again during a gym game. He was discharged in March 1994 and was granted a disablement pension by the War Pensions Agency.

The Ministry of Defence said yesterday that the Army would examine his case. A spokesman said: "Tests by civilian doctors may not necessarily take into account the extra physical demands of life in the Army."

Higher education given £165m boost

By JOHN O'LEARY
EDUCATION EDITOR

STUDENT loan payments are to be staggered to help to provide a £165 million lifeline for higher education next year, it was announced yesterday. But there is no guarantee that universities will keep the proceeds from tuition fees in future.

Baroness Blackstone, the Higher Education Minister, said new arrangements had been agreed before the

completion of the Treasury's overall spending review in recognition of the serious problems facing higher education. Universities would receive an extra £125 million, with £40 million going to boost hardship funds for students and provide incentives for student teachers.

Most of the additional money has been found by ending the annual payment of loans. From next September, new students will receive their loans in termly instalments, pushing a

third of the expenditure into the following financial year. The remainder will come from other administrative adjustments, ensuring that none of the department's programmes has to be cut.

Lady Blackstone said the extra funding would reduce the planned cut for universities to below the 1 per cent that Sir Ron Dearing said in his July report on higher education could be accommodated. Previous plans required a 2.7 per cent cut next year. The

new arrangements mean that universities will receive most of the first year's income from fees, with the remainder going towards student support. There will be some further savings in 1999, but no decision on the future use of fee income will be made until the Treasury's review is finished.

Details of a £10 million scheme to help student teachers with their fees are yet to be finalised. The Health Department is to pay fees for doctors and dentists in their final year.

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Meanwhile, put 1/2 a pack each of fresh flat parsley, fresh mint and fresh basil, a clove of garlic, 1 tablespoon of Dijon mustard and 1 tablespoon of capers into a food processor. Blend, adding 3 tablespoons of olive oil and a tablespoon of lemon juice. Season to taste.

Drain the vegetables and put into a serving dish. Pour dressing over and sprinkle the bacon on top. Leave for 10 minutes before serving.

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£45,000 for dyslexic who was failed by experts

One missed test led to bullying and dead-end jobs, reports Adrian Lee

AN INTELLIGENT young woman who left school with a reading age of seven won damages of more than £45,000 yesterday from the local authority that failed to diagnose her dyslexia.

The award to Pamela Phelps, 23, marked the first time in which liability has been found in such a case. It is likely to trigger hundreds of other claims from among Britain's estimated 2.3 million dyslexics.

The British Dyslexia Association said it hoped Miss Phelps's success would lead to a review of dyslexia screening by all education authorities. Miss Phelps, who said she still felt bitter towards the London Borough of Hillingdon, the authority involved, said she would spend the money on her education: she hoped to take GCSEs and become a computer programmer. "I will never lose my dyslexia, but I can improve it, even if it takes a lifetime."

It was only when her brother saw a television programme about the former racing driver, Stirling Moss, who is dyslexic, that her condition was discovered, shortly before she left Mellow Lane secondary school at the age of 16.

Miss Phelps, a single parent of Hayes End, West London, was dismissed from her first job because she made so many mistakes. Since then she has had a series of mental jobs.

She now has a reading age of 10½.

Mr Justice Garland, giving his judgment at the High Court, said that Diane Mellington, an educational psychologist employed by Hillingdon, mistakenly blamed emotional problems. "This was more than an error of judgment: it was a failure to exercise the degree of care and skill to be expected of an ordinarily competent member of her profession."

The court had been told that, when she was aged almost 12, Miss Phelps could

national average band. At her next school, Mellow Lane, her head of year said she "lacked motivation and did not try".

Cherie Booth, QC, told the court that, had her client been offered special tuition, she would have gone on to earn £20,000 a year. Instead, she was lumped in with children of low intelligence. Miss Phelps told the court she was bullied as a result of her dyslexia.

Speaking afterwards, her mother, Ann, recalled how she made a succession of visits to her daughter's schools, seeking

tendency to blame it on lack of attention, slow learning, laziness: you name it."

She said that Miss Phelps had made great strides but still suffered from a lack of self-esteem. Miss Phelps's solicitor, Jack Rabinowitz, who is representing 50 other dyslexics, said: "Many children have been badly let down and this case will mean they can now go ahead to claim compensation."

A spokeswoman for the British Dyslexia Association called for teachers to receive better training in spotting the warning signs. "Children will respond well if they are diagnosed early enough," she said. "With proper screening, dyslexia can be picked up at the age of five."

A spokesman for the London Borough of Hillingdon said the authority was disappointed by the judgement and was considering an appeal. He said Miss Mellington — now Mrs Loffler — who bore much of the judge's criticism, was still employed there as an educational psychologist. She refused to comment.

The award consisted of £6,500 for past and future tuition fees, £25,000 for future loss of earnings and £12,500 for general damages. The judge also awarded interest, taking the total to £45,650. He agreed that £37,000 should be withheld, pending a possible appeal by the authority.

"I knew there was something wrong but no one would listen. They kept trying to say it was problems at home. When dyslexia was diagnosed, it was such a relief"

still not write her address. One more test would have established the real problem. The judge said Miss Mellington "could and should have looked further, but did not".

The judgement includes the names of seven special needs teachers or educational psychologists who assessed Miss Phelps. The court was told that, at the age of seven, she was already reversing the letters d and b, a classic sign of dyslexia. At Hayes Park Infants School she was referred to a psychologist who said that her IQ of 93 was within the

ing help. "I knew there was something wrong, but no one would listen. They kept trying to say it was problems at home. When dyslexia was diagnosed, it was such a relief."

Jackie Leluvien, president of the Hillingdon Dyslexic Association, and now tutor to Miss Phelps, said she hoped the judgement would lead to more investment by education authorities. "There are still many cases slipping through the net because teachers do not have the expertise to spot dyslexia. It is not obvious. There is a

Recovery rates are good if problem is spotted early

The chances of children receiving help are often hit and miss, reports Ian Murray

THERE are fewer than 2,000 teachers specially trained in identifying and helping dyslexic children in Britain's 25,000 schools. Local education authorities have no centralised policy and provision is extremely patchy.

According to the Dyslexia Institute, which has trained 200 teachers in each of the past five years, every school needs a dyslexia teacher, especially at primary level, because the sooner the condition is identified the better the chance of ensuring a proper education.

Although dyslexia was first identified 100 years ago, it is only in the past 25 years that it has been recognised widely as a genuine

condition. Prior to that, according to Martin Turner, head of psychiatry at the institute, it was often regarded as a middle-class disease, used as an excuse by parents whose children were slow at learning.

Surveys show that between 2 and 4 per cent of all children are seriously dyslexic, which means that up to 24,000 of the 600,000 children in each school year suffer from it. "There are probably a large number who have slipped through the net," Mr Turner said. "Many local authorities have been saving money by not providing proper

care for dyslexics and now they can find themselves having to pay out millions in compensation for failing to do so."

The condition runs in families, making it possible for children at risk to be identified from birth. Margaret Snowling, a psychiatrist at the University of York, said that the first signs were an inability to pronounce simple words easily and a failure to understand the way rhymes worked. This made it difficult for children to repeat nursery rhymes.

Normal four-year-olds should be

able to recognise eight or so letters of the alphabet, while dyslexic ones would struggle to know a couple. In school, the gap between normal children and dyslexic children begins to widen rapidly.

"Their intelligence is quite normal, but they have short-term memory difficulties; they forget instructions and they can show high levels of frustration because they can see their peers are able to cope in a way that they can't," Ms Snowling said.

The test mentioned in the High Court was devised 25 years ago at

the mechanics of writing words with the letters the right way round. They confuse a number like 15 and write 51 instead.

Dyslexic children have to be given special teaching so that they can link sounds to letters. This involves repeating similar phonetic sounds with words until the child recognises them together.

Although dyslexics are never cured, they can be trained to read fluently even if they cannot always spell well. If training starts at 7 there is a 90 per cent chance of a child being able to cope in later years. If the condition is not spotted until the mid-teens, the chances of success fall to below 50 per cent.

Their ability to recognise right and left is tested by tasks such as touching an ear with the opposite hand. They are given words such as catastrophic, statistical and anemone to repeat. Ann Cooke, who runs the unit, said: "They can't work out



Pamela Phelps after winning her court case. She will spend the money on education

NEWS IN BRIEF

Asprilla's friend is convicted

A drug addict who bought cocaine with the help of £1,000 given to him by his friend Faustino Asprilla, the Newcastle United footballer, was convicted of possessing the drug. Leonel Sarmiento-Mottoa, 31, a cleaner from North London, was cleared of intent to supply. Before adjourning the case for presentence reports, Judge Peter Fingret told Sarmiento-Mottoa that the likely outcome would be a prison sentence.

Driver hid crime

A drink-driver whose two friends were killed in a crash placed the car keys on one of their bodies to hide his guilt. Ateeq Rafiq, 23, was told at Nottingham Crown Court that he faced a lengthy jail sentence after admitting causing death by careless driving.

Stamp delayed

The Queen has postponed the issue of stamps celebrating her golden wedding anniversary as a mark of respect to Diana, Princess of Wales. The four stamps, due to go on sale on October 7, will now be available from November 13, a week before the anniversary.

New film head

The producer Steve Norris, whose movies include *Memphis Belle*, is to succeed Sir Sydney Samuelson as head of the British Film Commission in November. The commission eases the way for filmmakers wanting to shoot movies in Britain.

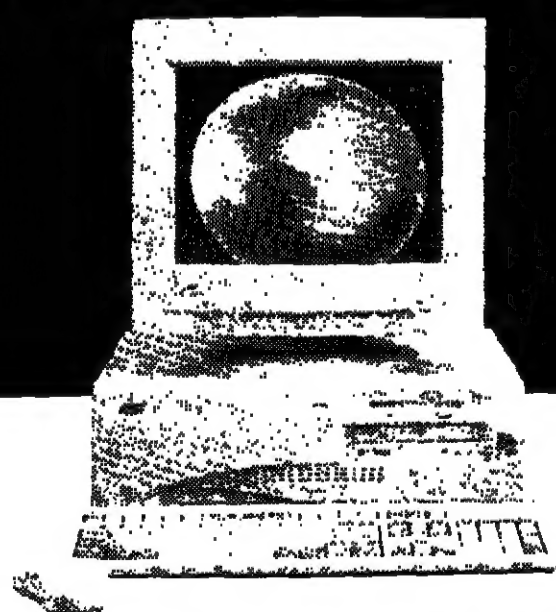
Fragrant tickets

Lever Brothers are promoting their new brand of Radion by impregnating London bus tickets with the smell of the washing powder. The tickets give off the scent when rubbed, and carry the slogan: "Your washing could smell as fresh as this ticket."

Pier for sale

Totland Bay Pier on the Isle of Wight, offering tranquillity and a view of The Needles, is to be sold next month. The 450ft-long pier, built in 1880, has a guide price of £10,000 but its new owner will have to spend thousands more repairing the planking.

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Libraries are urged to charge for book loans

By VALERIE ELLIOTT, WHITEHALL EDITOR

LIBRARIES in England and Wales must consider charges to pay for the services that will meet the needs of the next century, the Audit Commission says. The number of books borrowed has fallen by 19 per cent in the past ten years, and unless libraries offer the latest technology they will face further decline.

Less money is being spent on books — £94 million last year, down 10 per cent in a decade — with the highest cuts in London (down 30 per cent) and the North East (down 25 per cent). Many libraries have also cut their opening hours, with the figure down 6 per cent nationally. London and the North East again had the largest cuts.

The commission says today

that management of the country's 4,000 libraries must become more dynamic and that they should play an important role in linking the public to the information superhighway. In a report about the future of the library service, *Due for Renewal*, libraries are told they must invest in new equipment to catch up with the technological revolution.

It suggests that one way of helping to pay for the new facilities is through charging. Some charge is already made by libraries for many ICT-based services, but the law forbids them from charging for the loan of books. Last year libraries raised £12 million in hire charges for videotapes and music CDs.

The Audit Commission

clearly hopes that the suggestion of possible charging will encourage a debate on the issue. But the status quo for the library service is not an option: "There are signs it is in gradual decline and may not be strongly placed to take up the challenges now facing it."

Savings of about £14 million were identified in improved stock control of books, with regular updating. The report also suggests that more computers would allow readers to take out their own books, and to reserve titles electronically, cutting staff costs and queueing.

Unless action is taken, the report says: "Library authorities that do not rise to these challenges run the risk of becoming increasingly inefficient, ineffective and irrelevant to the needs of those whom they serve."

But libraries attract people of all ages and social classes, and the report says they are well regarded and well liked. There were about 335 million visits to libraries last year, compared with 140 million going to local swimming pools and sports centres. The number of visits to local museums and galleries was 10 million.

Libraries cost an average £13 per head of the population, with 12 million people visiting their branch every fortnight. Some 24 million adults are members of a library and 460 million books were issued, nine for every person in the country.

Only readers in Finland, Denmark and The Netherlands borrow more library books per head. The Audit Commission also claims that funding on libraries is being used for staff costs and not for spending on new books.

Staff costs have increased by 10 per cent in the past ten years and have taken up the 10 per cent of extra funding. The library service costs £670 million a year. The Audit Commission says that the average salary for library staff has risen from £12,900 to £15,800 in ten years.

"What is worrying for the library service is that, when it is caught between a budget ceiling and rising staff costs, the result is a squeeze on the books and materials budget."



Beverley Williams, a librarian at Manchester Central Library. Technology will mean readers need not visit

Read-only will be just a memory

Computers lead 21st-century plan for new services, says Russell Jenkins

THE imposing classical entrance to the Manchester Central Library speaks volumes for the sense of history it was opened in 1934 to disseminate. Once through the swing doors, however, the reader is offered a glimpse of a bright digitised future.

It was to the library once called the "British Museum of the North" that researchers for the Audit Commission report came to investigate how public libraries could exploit information technology to remain important institutions into the 21st century.

Readers and researchers make 1.5 million visits to the library each year and the numbers, driven by the need to acquire technical information for professional and education needs, are increasing, allowing it to buck the national trend. While the number of book issues across the country is down 19 per cent over the past ten years, the number has increased 40 per cent at the Central Library over the same period.

Its collection of about two million volumes, predominantly in the social sciences and technical fields, is one of the most important in the country. At the same time Alec Gallimore, the library manager, has ensured an IT strategy that will bring the library to the people.

He believes that libraries are evolving from being central stores of materials — to which every user has to make regular visits and spend many hours in study — to information centres which can distribute information through

networks from "one end of the world to another". Microfilm will give way to digitised information. He said: "One of the things we are doing at the moment is taking IT services to the public."

"We see this as a means of getting information right down to local level. We have a network connected to local district libraries so they can access information held here. We have databases and CD-Roms on the network."

"Our aim is to take information to people wherever they are, without them having to come to the building. The original library will remain, but it will be much more heavily dependent on IT."

Wimslow Public Library, run by Cheshire County Council, is a popular branch library serving the affluent Cheshire suburb. Over the past decade, it has suffered its share of the national trend away from book borrowing.

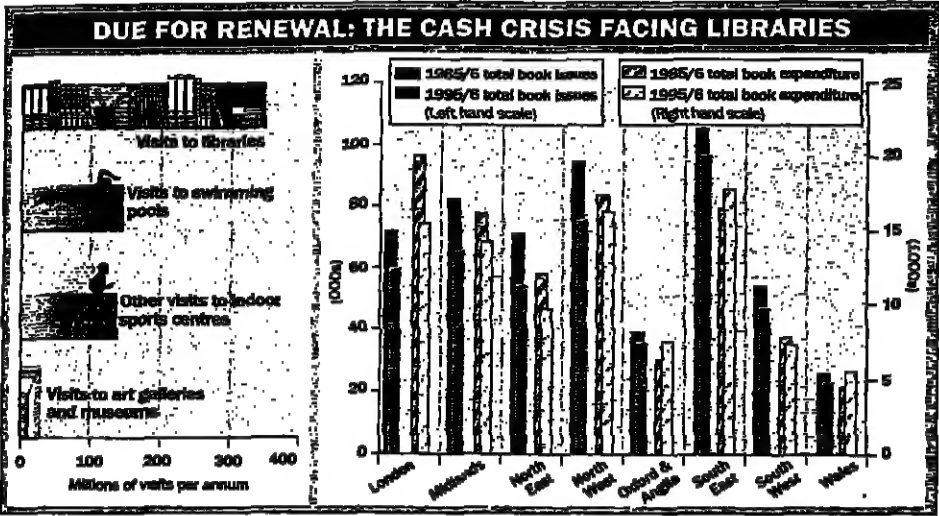
The modern glass-fronted library, which shares a car park with a Sainsbury store, has transformed itself into a supermarket for information

to attract regular library users. It offers a host of services, including entertainment videos, special interest CD-Roms, music cassettes.

A library shop offers educational wall charts, cards and books bearing titles like *Tea Shop Walks in Cheshire*. Outside the library, visitors are invited to access 24 hour information on bus and rail timetables, city maps and council services on a touch-driven electronic screen. Once inside, the usual borrowing and reference sections for adults and children are bolstered by on-screen databases giving information on local organisation and job vacancies.

An independent company surveys the shelves by computer to ensure that they are replenished with fresh titles and that the stock is circulated through the area. Overdue books cost 10p for every day they are late.

Barbara West, Wimslow's area manager, said: "One thing that is different now is that we are actually saying what we have to offer rather than, as in the past, assuming people know. The other thing is people are more demanding and much more information conscious."



A Clean Sweep.



Michelin Pilots continue their winning ways in the British Touring Car Championships, taking the 1997 driver, manufacturer and team titles with Alain Menu, Renault UK and Williams Renault Dealer Racing. This year's triumph brings the total number of Michelin wins in the BTCC to more than 70 since the world's number one tyre maker entered the fray in 1993. But the ultimate winner is you the motorist. Pilots tested to the limits in motorsport ensure you get tyres that excel on the road. Fit the sure winners to your car - Michelin Pilot high performance tyres.



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Customers demand to shop around the clock

By ROBIN YOUNG

DEMAND is increasing for Britain to stay open all hours, according to a report published today.

Eighty per cent of the population think that companies should provide customer care by telephone outside normal working hours, according to research sponsored by BT and First Direct.

More than a third of those questioned for the Future Foundation, a commercial think-tank, said they would like to shop outside normal hours in department stores, while 58 per cent wanted pharmacies to open earlier and close later. Almost half wanted grocery stores to open longer. There was also public demand, the researchers found, for pubs to stay open beyond midnight.

Leon Kreitzman, of the Future Foundation, said yesterday: "It is younger people who are most keen to see flexible opening hours. They are the group already enjoying the 24-hour experience — dropping off dry-cleaning on the way to the pub or cinema, collecting it on the way back and doing a quick run around the supermarket afterwards."

Mr Kreitzman said that there was a trend toward increasing use of the telephone to get information or services. "In this area," he said, "it is the 25-44 year olds, those with children, high-income groups, shiftworkers and those who have pressure on their time who like the convenience of ordering goods and services from home in the evenings or at weekends."

The report says that 33 per cent of customers are willing to pay extra for out-of-hours service. Almost 75 per cent of

businesses accept that a 24-hour service is inevitable, yet 70 per cent of retailers said they had no plans to alter their hours.

Peter Simpson, commercial director of First Direct, said: "The point about the 24-hour society is the freedom it gives people, allowing them to decide when they want to bank or shop."

The appetite for extended hours is not confined to commerce, the report adds. There is strong demand, backed by 60 per cent of consumers, for doctors and dentists to be more available at night and over weekends, and 20 per cent would like schools to open beyond standard hours.

Dominic Owens, BT's head of business communications, said: "Companies cannot afford to stall their response for long."

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City that dreams of never sleeping

By PAUL WILKINSON

THE people of Leeds have embarked on a multimillion-pound initiative to make it the 24-hour city.

In the past four years, civic leaders have spent £10 million on turning the Yorkshire city of 700,000 people into a metropolis to rival any European capital. Leeds claims Britain's largest financial services sector outside the City of London, and is fast becoming one of the country's biggest cultural centres.

Already home to Opera North, the city recently became the Northern Ballet's base, and a college of music is being established. The West Yorkshire Playhouse, under Jude Kelly's directorship, has an international reputation. The Leeds piano competition is one of the world's finest showcases for new talent.

"We have sought to stretch



Leeds has a thriving nightlife and relaxed licensing laws

the life of the city by encouraging more and more residents, visitors and business to recognise its potential and make greater use of the centre, particularly in the evenings," said Paul Paley, chairman of the local authority's city centre committee. "A well-used city that is safe, accessible and friendly to people of all ages, all walks of life, day and night is our ultimate ambition."

The city council is seeking to provide the infrastructure and political climate for public and private enterprise to flourish. Car parks on the perimeter of the central area were made safer, with bright lighting, security guards and closed circuit television. Cam-

eras were also set up across the city centre and last week the council introduced foot patrols to provide help and security for the public. Traffic has been barred from many streets to allow pedestrians greater freedom of movement.

The policy of relaxed licensing regulations had led to a remarkable growth of nightlife, which thrives on the 50,000 students who attend courses in Leeds. There are Michelin-starred restaurants and theme pubs, and bars are encouraged to put tables on the streets. A property development programme has tried to increase the number of people living in the city centre.

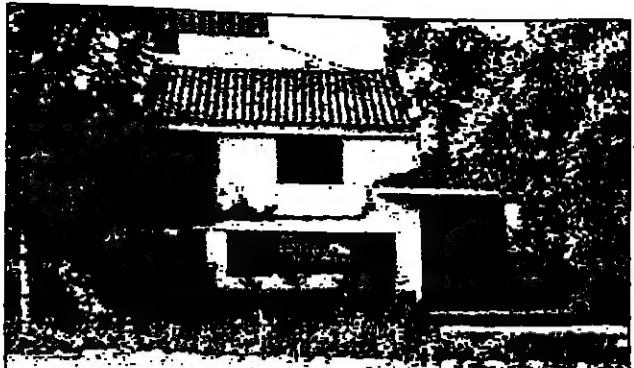
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House party host denies Tory plot to make Patten leader

MPs have been smelling a conspiracy over a meeting at arch-conspirator's home, reports Andrew Pierce



Garel-Jones's Spanish home: "Just a reunion," he said

THE arch-conspirator of the Conservative Party broke cover yesterday to deny rumours of a plot to oust William Hague as leader and replace him with the former Governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten.

Speculation of a conspiracy has been rife since it emerged that the Machiavellian former Chief Whip, Tristan Garel-Jones, played host at his Spanish home last week to John Major, Mr Patten and William Waldegrave.

According to the gossip at Westminster, the group was gathering among the orange groves of Candeleda, near Madrid, to scheme against Mr Hague. Nervous Tory MPs speculated that Mr Major was being urged to stand down in his Huntingdon constituency to make way for Mr Patten, who would make a triumphant return to Westminster to oppose Mr Hague.

It was, after all, Mr Garel-Jones who hosted a meeting of ministers at his London home in 1990 after the first ballot of the Tory leadership campaign, which concluded that Mrs Thatcher was finished. That meeting included Mr Waldegrave and Mr Patten and became known as the Catherine Place conspiracy.

Mr Garel-Jones yesterday not only denied the conspiracy but said he was hosting a reunion of old friends who were members of the Blue Chip Dining Club — and that Mr Hague had been invited.

"I do not think a single word was expressed which would have caused William any unease. People always accuse me of being a conspirator, but I am no longer in a place to influence events in the Commons. I am a footnote in political history," said Mr Garel-Jones.

"I invited William about six weeks ago. It hardly suggests a sinister plot against him when, with the agreement of my other guests, he was invited to join us."

The four house guests were members of the Blue Chip Dining Club, which was drawn from the brightest of the 1979 intake of MPs. "We are all old friends."

The Spanish house party was augmented on Saturday by the arrival of Tom King, the former

Letters, page 21

Major foresaw bloody fighting

By NICHOLAS WOOD

JOHN MAJOR foresaw the infighting and personal rancour that wrecked his Government, according to a television programme on his years in power.

Within days of winning the 1992 general election — his greatest triumph — the former Prime Minister told Jeffrey Archer that he faced five years of misery at the hands of his enemies within Tory ranks. The now Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare said: "He delivered a sentence that I will remember for the rest of my life: 'I think I ought to warn you I am about to have five of the most unpleasant years of my life... There are a lot of people out there who are cross with me and this is an election they did not expect us to win. They are going to take it out on me and take it out on the party. It's going to be a bloody time.'"

In the same programme, the former Cabinet minister David Mellor admits that he behaved "foolishly" in having an affair with Antonia de Sancha, an actress.

In *Major in Power*, to be screened next month by BSkyB, Mr Mellor says that even the Archangel Gabriel would have struggled to contain a Tory party riven by naked ambition.

Ministers break ranks over pay rise sacrifice

Philip Webster

on hopes by Cook

and Blunkett

to salvage some

of the Cabinet's

£16,500 award

THE Cabinet pay dispute burst into the open yesterday as two senior ministers publicly countered suggestions that they had agreed to give up a £16,500 increase.

As John Prescott anxiously tried to arrange a compromise that would allow the issue to be settled before next week's Labour Party conference, Gordon Brown delivered another call for restraint.

Speaking in Hong Kong, he insisted on discipline in public spending and added that he was demanding that public pay settlements "across the board" must be guided by firmness and fairness. While Treasury sources denied that the message was aimed specifically at Cabinet colleagues, the implication was clear.

The row has become the Government's worst presentational failure since the election. First Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, and then David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, confirmed that ministers had far from given up hope of salvaging some of the £16,500 that they were expected to take in April.

Mr Cook said from New York that there had been "unanimous agreement" in the Cabinet last week that the increase should be "deferred". He said Mr Prescott was looking at how the rise should be "phased and staged in". Cabinet ministers have

made little effort to conceal their displeasure at the way in which they feel they were "bounced" last week into forgoing the pay rise which they had agreed to delay until next April, although it was due this year.

The irritation was evident in remarks from Mr Blunkett, who appeared to suggest that the row would not have happened had they been allowed to take the rise in May.

He said: "I think what we need to get across to the electorate is, far from actually being avaricious and greedy, we've already taken a pay cut of £16,500 for this year, for which we have received no credit. And now we are being abused for trying to sort out next year, which would never have arisen had we not taken a cut this year."

Speaking on BBC Radio 4's *World at One*, Mr Blunkett added: "I'm talking about

sorting out the resources that were allocated in last year's review body report. Pay increases for next year — as, of course, with teachers and nurses and doctors — would be recommended by the review body, which is currently sitting. I think that is something that we need to sort out quite separately."

Mr Prescott is trying to find a solution that covers the need to show restraint over the £16,500 rise, and the February recommendation from the pay review bodies that will cover next year's rise.

The row over Cabinet pay came after the Prime Minister moved to extricate himself last week from a potential row by making plain that he had no intention of taking his "entitlement" — a 40 per cent or £40,000-plus rise next year, which would have taken him to a total of £143,860.

Mr Blair urged Cabinet colleagues to take their full salaries, but by the end of the day it was indicated that a substantial number had decided to ignore that call and instead to follow their leader's example.

Now it is clear that was only a holding position. One minister said last night that he had yet to hear from Mr Prescott. Another said the row was "turning into a nightmare".

Nigel Lawson, page 17



Mr Hague tucking into a balti curry during his tour of the West Midlands yesterday

Hague puts suite heart ahead of Thatcher

By ANDREW PIERCE
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

WILLIAM HAGUE confirmed yesterday that he would break with tradition, and defy Baroness Thatcher, by sharing an hotel room with his fiancée at the Tory conference.

Despite protests from Tory traditionalists, led by the former Prime Minister, Mr Hague, 36, and Ffion Jenkins, 29, will book into the same £300-a-night suite at the Imperial Hotel in Blackpool.

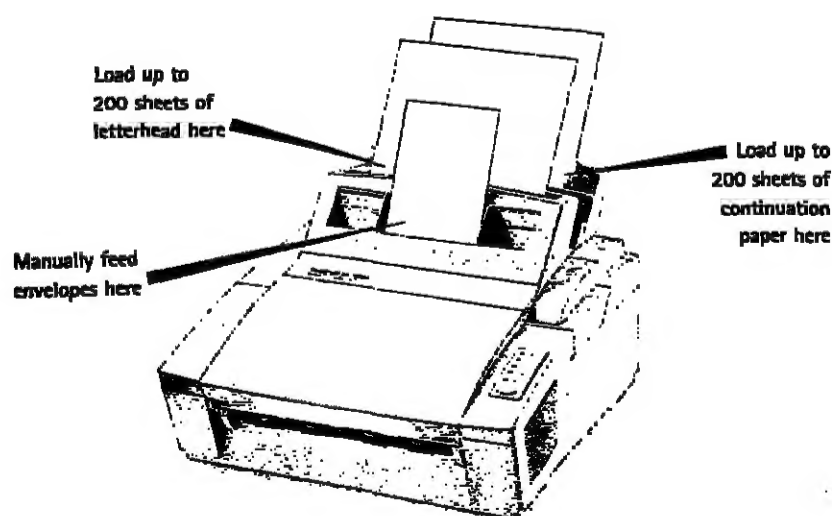
Mr Hague insisted in a radio interview yesterday that he was determined to do his "own thing". John and Norma Major and Margaret and Denis Thatcher have stayed in the suite.

"People know we are getting married in December," he said. "We are absolutely committed to each other." He said on BBC Radio 5 Live, Mr Hague, who lives with Miss Jenkins in a flat in West London, added: "I don't think people take exception to people in that situation being very close and spending a lot of time together."

Mr Hague said he would not be cowed by media criticism or adverse comments from party members. Lady Thatcher feared the latter might be upset by pictures of the couple coming down the stairs after staying in the same room overnight.

Mr Hague added: "A partnership is extremely important for [support] in good times and bad times."

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A literate democrat succeeds with gentle persuasion

"NINETEEN ninety-seven is the date of a seismic rumble! A political earthquake!" Thus spoke the president of the Liberal Democrats, Robert Maclennan, at Eastbourne yesterday. Mr Maclennan is no earthquake. Nor is he a seismic rumble. Even as a minor tremor, he hardly registers on the Richter scale.

The MP for Caidness, Sutherland & Easter Ross could be compared to the slight shaking of a petal in the breeze. But he is an honest politician, a thinker and a wordsmith. The persistence in our politics of sensitive intellects like his gives hope for liberal democracy. No

other party in Britain would allow space to brave originals such as Conrad Russell: no other conference would have accorded Robert Maclennan the standing ovation he enjoyed yesterday.

The pained, schoolmasterly and slightly querulous Scot will hear reported today only those passages deemed newsworthy in the controversy about cooperating with Labour. Bile-sized chunks for butterfly minds are what survive broadcasting editors' pencils, and PR-wise politicians see diminishing point in drafting fine extended prose which will never be reported. But here, at least, is



MATTHEW PARRIS
POLITICAL SKETCH

one passage from the Liberal Democrat president's speech which deserves a wider audience.

Labour, said Mr Maclennan, offered "a sort of bravura vacuum". The Tories "relied on fear. Old, tried and trusted... After 18 years the Tories had nothing to hope for but fear." To the discomfort of the platform party, their president was even-handed between the two parties. Describing new Labour

as adjectives in search of a noun, he added: "In a sense, Tony Blair is like Fortinbras, the character with the best timing in all Shakespeare. He comes on in Act V, scene 2, of *Hamlet* to find an army of dead and dying main characters and, not surprisingly, says that he is taking over."

"The last Tory Government was, anyway, a bit like *Hamlet*, with a decent, dithering lead, any number of untrustworthy courtiers, a ghost

(female) who kept barging in, and the Tory party herself cast in the role of Ophelia, floating downstream, chanting snatches of old songs, before being dragged under, drowned, and given a bad-tempered funeral."

Referring (without naming her) to the "outpouring of distress and emotion" which had followed the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, Maclennan detected a sort of national confusion and self-suspicion. "I think there stirs in this country a rejection of whatever is uncaring, ungenerous, insular and grindingly arithmetical."

He framed the problem

government refuses to confront: "We are still a relatively rich country but deprivation of opportunity is still relatively widespread." Against such a draft a spin-doctor would scrawl a marginal note: "Toughen up. Try despair / underclass / abject / millions in poverty."

To me, the moderation of Mr Maclennan's language added to its power. During one of his speeches I remember his invoking Milton, Plato, Shakespeare (several references), Proust, Gide and at least two minor French novelists.

At the peroration of yesterday's address, he described

what was distinctive about his party's spirit: "The belief in human diversity; the belief that the free interplay of conflicting ideas will create new, yet better ideas; and a willingness to trust people."

This struck me as a fair claim. Failing to overstate, it might have failed to inspire; but Maclennan took the risk. The whole conference rose to applaud him. Mr Maclennan looked bewildered at the approval — perhaps fearful that he had said something unwise. But he deserved his applause and his party deserves applause for applauding him.

IN BRIEF

Student fees scheme attacked

The Liberal Democrats launched a campaign yesterday against the Government's plans to introduce tuition fees for university students. Speaker after speaker attacked Labour's policy and representatives backed a motion rejecting tuition fees for first degrees.

Don Foster, the party's education spokesman, told the conference that Gordon Brown would be remembered for ever as the Chancellor who brought in "the student poll tax". Phil Willis, the higher education spokesman, said that plans for the millennium dome should be abandoned and the money used for student grants. He added: "The message from this conference to the Government must be loud, clear and resolute — have the courage to invest in education."

Many Liberal Democrat MPs are angry at their own leadership's intention to scrap the party's policy of raising income tax by 1p to boost spending on education. Paddy Ashdown indicated on Monday that the change would come before the next election. Party insiders predicted that the federal policy committee would oppose the plan, which is widely seen as a sop to Labour.

Labour accused over pollution

Matthew Taylor, the Lib Dem environment spokesman, accused the Government of spouting rhetoric about green issues without taking effective action to curb pollution. He said emissions of carbon dioxide — one of the "greenhouse gases" that cause global warming — had risen since May. "If the last few months of Labour is anything to go by, then no-one should any longer believe that a change of government necessarily means a greener government."

The conference defied the leadership by backing a policy to speed up the rate of petrol price rises to ensure a reduction in greenhouse gases. Delegates overwhelmingly voted in favour of an annual 8 per cent rise in petrol prices, rather than the 6 per cent imposed by the Government.

Human rights promise 'hollow'

Jenny Tonge, the Liberal Democrat spokeswoman on international development, accused the Government of making "hollow promises" on human rights. She attacked ministers' decision not to block the export of Hawk jets and armoured personnel carriers to Indonesia, describing it as the first major failure of Labour's ethical foreign policy.

Dr Tonge, who is MP for Richmond Park, also paid tribute to the efforts made by Diana, Princess of Wales, in campaigning for a worldwide ban on anti-personnel landmines. "Her relentless efforts should remind us... that controversy should not deter us from pursuing our principles and that at times risks need to be taken to achieve greater goals."

Call for inquiry into euthanasia

Calls for a Royal Commission on voluntary euthanasia will be debated by the conference tomorrow. A motion to be proposed by the writer and broadcaster Sir Ludovic Kennedy suggests that a commission should investigate the implications of allowing doctors to end the lives of terminally ill and suffering patients. The discussion follows recent controversy over admissions by GPs that they have hastened the deaths of patients.

Ashdown to warn of risk needed for more success

By JILL SHERMAN, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

PADDY ASHDOWN will today urge his party not to tie his hands over further links with Labour, giving warning that the Liberal Democrats will have to take risks to build on their present success.

Mr Ashdown will make clear today that he intends to work more closely with Labour where it benefits his own party, such as on the constitution, a single currency and Northern Ireland. He will also call on Tony Blair urgently to commit Britain to joining a single currency at the turn of the century in an attempt to secure a common position between two parties on EMU.

Mr Ashdown's decision to take on his critics, who have accused him of selling out to Labour, follows a stinging attack on him by Peter Mandelson, the Minister without Portfolio. In an article in *The Times* yesterday, Mr Mandelson accused the Liberal Democrat leader of pandering to his party by attacking Labour's spending plans.

Representatives at the party's conference in Eastbourne were furious about Mr Mandelson's intervention and stepped up their attacks on the Government's proposed tuition fees for students and its environmental policy. Andrew Stunell said: "Dear Peter. If you want to negotiate, please negotiate. If you want to blackmail our leader, please get lost."

Today Alistair Darling, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, will give a robust defence of the Government's spending plans and call on the Liberal Democrats to halt their continuing gibes about health and education spending. At a fringe meeting, Mr Darling will argue that it is all very well to co-operate with the



EASTBOURNE

Liberal Democrats on the constitution but the party would have to be more realistic about economic issues.

Today Mr Ashdown will be seen as bowing to Labour's demands when he calls on his party to trust him and allow him "to take risks with ideas, risks with policies and risks with politics". He is already facing a party backlash over moves to drop the party's key policy of adding an extra penny to income tax to boost education spending. Insiders said that several senior MPs were furious that he was trying to bounce them into dropping a policy they supported.

But in his conference speech today, Mr Ashdown will warn his party that it must grab the opportunities of one of the most "fluid" periods of politics this century. Liberal Democrats should build on the chance of closer collaboration with Labour to influence the Government's agenda in key areas and lead the debate.

In the first four months of the Labour Government, the Liberal Democrats have secured PR in Europe, five seats on a joint Cabinet committee and the promise of a commission on PR at Westminster, he will say. This could help it to gain seats in Europe and in a Scottish Parliament.

But Mr Ashdown will also insist that the Liberal Demo-

crats will not drop their constructive opposition to Labour's plans for health and education. Yesterday morning he was clearly stung by Mr Mandelson's remarks and vowed to press on with criticising Labour for adopting the Tory's spending plans.

While he insisted that Mr Mandelson's attack could not have been more opportune and had played into his hands, colleagues said that he had been surprised and hurt by the ferocity of the personal criticism.

Other senior Liberal Democrat MPs were angry that Labour had once again tried to hijack their conference. Two years ago Mr Blair talked about closer co-operation with the Liberal Democrats in an interview that dominated the first few days of their annual meeting. But Labour sources made clear that both Mr Mandelson and Mr Darling were echoing Mr Blair's own frustration about the Liberal Democrats' "oppositionist" attitude.

Today Mr Ashdown will try to set the agenda on Europe by urging Mr Blair to spell out the Government's position on EMU. He will urge Labour to take Britain into a single currency by 2001 at the latest. Last night Malcolm Bruce, the Treasury spokesman, gave a CBI fringe meeting the same message on EMU. He called on Tony Blair to set out a "declaration of intent", committing Britain to the principle of a EMU membership and of joining as early as possible.

Mr Bruce conceded that it was now increasingly unlikely that the Government would be prepared to join a single currency by 1999. "The indecision in Labour, and particularly Tory, ranks has left Britain in our view poorly prepared for 1999 entry."



Simon Eddy, 13, of St Austell was cheered for a speech in favour of cutting pollution in which he said: "We are living in what can only be described as a microwave. We are frying ourselves." The next speaker, Keith Melton, said: "I believe we have just seen a future leader of the Liberal Democrats. I only hope he doesn't go bald."

Shortlist quota for women fails to secure two-thirds majority

By POLLY NEWTON

THE Liberal Democrats yesterday rejected a move to give women 50 per cent of the places on the party's key policy committees also failed to secure a two-thirds majority.

However, the conference

agreed new measures that will guarantee that women make up half of the party's candidates' list at the European elections in 1999. The system, supported by representatives, will also ensure that at least half of the total number of seats won by the Liberal Democrats in those elections go to women, although there are fears that it could be open to legal challenge under sex discrimination laws.

Mrs Ballard told the conference: "Constituency parties need to have a requirement of 50 per cent female shortlists to make sure that they all actively go out and encourage women to be candidates."

Justine McGuinness, chairman of the Women Liberal Democrats group, which put forward the motion, said the

party could not hope to end sexism in Britain if it did not change itself. "If we want women in this party to have equal opportunities, we have to change the rules. It's as simple as that."

But Val Pattie from Saffron Walden in Essex said: "If we are to be taken seriously, we have to take the responsibility of presenting women of the right calibre, not manipulate the system to suit ourselves."

Jo White from Bath said that the proposed change would put "token women" on shortlists. "We don't need more token women, we need more trained women."

Campaigners for the 50 per cent option later said they were disappointed that it had not been passed but insisted that they would not give up.

What is needed is balance on both sides. Mr Mandelson should not try to impose a uniformity of view on the Lib Dems, while they should recognise that to be taken seriously as partners they should not abuse the Government.

Lord Jenkins of Hillhead yesterday put the latest squall into its proper perspective in a typically magisterial way. Mr Mandelson, he said on the BBC, is "certainly a very skilled politician... but I sometimes think that he'd also be wise to realise that silence can be eloquent and a great virtue in politics. I don't think he likes periods of silence."

That is the trouble with party conferences. There is a lot of misleading noise.

PETER RIDDELL

Small squall will soon blow over

RIDDELL
ON POLITICS

about what the creation of the consultative Cabinet committee implies. Labour wants the Lib Dems to behave like loyal government backbenchers and restrain their criticisms, while the Lib Dems want to retain all the freedoms of opposition. Both are wrong.

Labour leaders often regard the Lib Dems in a patronising way — as the southwestern wing of new Labour and as well-intentioned, but often woolly and ill-disciplined. There is little recognition of the Lib Dems' separate ideological and regional roots. The party reaches parts of the country that Labour does not and has had a lasting impact on the debate about constitutional reform and the environment. Labour tends to brush this aside.

Implicit in Mr Mandelson's article was the belief that, if the Liberal

Democrats want to sit round the Cabinet table, they should suppress their own policies and accept "the responsibilities of government". But talk of "oppositionist" is as naive as Mr Mandelson accuses Paddy Ashdown of being.

The Lib Dems cannot be expected to back every item of Government policy when they are not part of that Government and the consultations at present only cover the specific, though important, area of constitutional reform. What the Lib Dems can be expected to do, first, is to support the Government on the agreed areas of the constitutional agenda and, secondly, to adopt what Mr Ashdown calls a "constructive" tone on other items. What really irks the Labour leadership is the sanctimonious "purer than thou" tone of some Lib Dem criticisms of the Government on public spending and taxes. The Lib Dems have made some valid criticisms of the inconsistencies of Labour's election pledges on public services, but Mr Mandelson had a

fair point in saying that the Lib Dems are failing to address some of the tough choices on spending — for instance by opposing the shift to student tuition fees.

What is needed is balance on both sides. Mr Mandelson should not try to impose a uniformity of view on the Lib Dems, while they should recognise that to be taken seriously as partners they should not abuse the Government.

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PETER RIDDELL

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THE TIMES

Civil war as Cape gangs battle

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Civil war as Cape gangs battle

FROM SAM KILEY
IN JOHANNESBURG

CAPE TOWN'S gang violence has intensified into a local civil war after a weekend of assassinations, bomb and grenade attacks which destroyed several homes in a conflict which threatens to shatter the Cape's tourist industry.

Most of the victims have been children as gangsters have resorted to ever heavier weapons in the past three weeks of tit-for-tat killings involving gangs and a vigilante group, People Against Gangs and Drugs (Pagad). On Monday Sadick Toffar, a month-old baby, was killed and her brother and two sisters, both under five, were wounded. Her seven-year-old brother's leg was torn off when gangsters threw a grenade into her home. Their home was also strafed with automatic weapons as their family's room was engulfed in flames.

The evening of their death was marked by four other bomb or grenade attacks as part of gang-on-gang violence and revenge attacks against the Pagad vigilantes for their killing of a prominent gangland figure earlier this year. A doctor associated with the vigilantes was shot dead in front of a patient by gangsters.

Killings are frequent in Cape Town, whose violent culture threatens to burst the luxurious bubble of the white residential areas beneath the Table Mountain which is aparthied screened from the grubby lives of its victims for 47 years.

Last week Regan Pietersen, nine, suffered burns to his neck, arms and chest after a petrol bomb was hurled at his parents' house in Mitchell's Plain, while three-year-old Bonita Herman was burned by the previous week after a similar attack on her parents' home on the Cape Flats.

Gang leaders have issued a warning that they would soon begin targeting tourists and white homes in a move which will affect Cape's tourist industry.

The escalation in the violence has been sparked in part by the murder of Moegamat Nur Booley, a Pagad member.

דגים
מגוונים
למכירה



דגים
מגוונים
למכירה



Duck conservation stamps depicting a mallard, left, and a shelduck, right, issued by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel. The society has joined forces with the Palestinian Council of Health to protect wildlife from the ravages of hunting in the region.

Bird of prey bears message about peace to Middle East

Lesser kestrel has brought together Israelis and Arabs where diplomacy failed, Michael Binyon reports

A FALCON is doing more to bring Israelis and Palestinians together than any diplomatic negotiators. Environmentalists from both sides have set up a new joint body to protect wildlife, especially birds, to ensure that political disputes do not jeopardise one of the world's most important migratory routes.

Their immediate focus is on the lesser kestrel, a falcon, that nests for three months of the year in the warm hills of the Levant. Palestinian bird-watchers are co-operating with their Israeli counterparts to protect the nests of these migratory birds of prey, now considered endangered as only about 400 arrive each

year. Nesting boxes are to be placed in Jericho, a breeding site for the kestrel, and also in west Jerusalem.

The two sides are also to set up a network of birdwatching centres in Israel and in the West Bank areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority to monitor the annual migration of millions of birds across the narrow land bridge between Africa and Asia. They will report the species and variety of birds as well as any decline in numbers and will lobby to

ensure strict observance of local laws prohibiting the shooting of birds during the migration season.

Birdwatchers around the world have long been concerned at the huge dangers facing migratory birds over the Levant. Shooting is not popular in Israel, and there are only 5,000 licensed hunters, mostly Druze. Strict bans on gun ownership are enforced on the Palestinians under occupation, and in neighbouring Jordan there

have long been bans on shooting birds out of season. But birds are killed on a massive scale in Syria, Turkey and Lebanon, with 500,000 hunters in Lebanon alone.

The Palestinian-Israeli Environmental Secretariat has been established to translate into action the promise by politicians who negotiated the Oslo peace accords that both sides would work together to improve and protect their environment. As a result, the Palestinian Council of Health

and the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel have come together in a new non-governmental organisation to develop joint activities and support Israeli-Palestinian co-operation.

The body, set up in June, aims to bring together Palestinian and Israeli young people, teachers and journalists to promote environmental awareness. It will use these projects to encourage activities that break down distrust and teach each side to accept the other. The secretariat will set up a database to help decision-makers and lobbyists and encourage "responsible development and joint assessment".

The first joint expedition was organised two months ago, with 20 Israeli and 20 Palestinian children. More are planned for the spring migration. Children are also being encouraged to follow the bird migration routes on sites set up on the Internet which will track birds using satellite transmitters.

Both sides are enthusiastic. Thaeer Abu Diab, the Palestinian co-director, said he believed such projects could hold the peace process together. He did not think the political stand-off had dimmed their determination: "Things can't get more difficult than they are now." He said the Palestinian Authority had toughened the

regulations restricting hunting and all sides were aware of their responsibility to protect one of the most important migratory routes in the world. Birds flying south from the Arctic winter or north again in spring flew over Israel and Jordan, one of the few routes where they could avoid flying over water and rest.

Yossi Leshem, a zoologist at Tel Aviv University, said the new secretariat wanted to extend co-operation to all countries of the Middle East. "Hopefully if the peace process goes on we can work with all our neighbours. Birds know no boundaries."

Leading article, page 21

Israel 'identifies' suicide bombers

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM

ISRAELI security officials believe they have identified the five Islamic militants who carried out the suicide bombings nearly two months ago in Jerusalem that killed 20 Jews and wounded more than 300.

Media reports said the bombers came from areas of the West Bank still under Israeli control, but that their leaders and support network were based in territory run by the Palestinian Authority. Yasser Arafat, its leader, had maintained that the bombers came from abroad.

A military intelligence officer told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee that it was the tactic of Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, to recruit the bombers from areas under Israeli control so as to not involve the Palestinian Authority.

Their identities became known on Sunday after troops imposed an air and land

cordon around a West Bank village close to Nablus. Security sources said DNA tests were carried out on suspected relatives of the bombers. The official Voice of Palestine radio later identified the village as Assira, north of Nablus. It has a population of about 7,000 Arabs and is reputedly a Hamas stronghold. The siege of the village was continuing yesterday, prompting violent protests from Palestinians.

Binyamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister, said: "We have a very high degree of certainty that the perpetrators came from the Palestinian areas. They did not come from abroad."

Palestinian leaders dismissed his claim that they had not done enough to prevent the bombings. Ahmed Tibi, an Arafat aide, said that if the bombers came from a village under Israeli control, "they acted under the nose of Binyamin Netanyahu".

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Paint clue at Diana crash site studied

Paris: Police scientists yesterday began analysing flakes of paint taken from the wall of the road tunnel where the car carrying Diana, Princess of Wales, crashed, in the hope of establishing whether the fatal accident followed a collision with another vehicle (Ben Macintyre writes).

The tunnel beneath the Place de l'Alma was sealed off as investigators from the National Police Criminal Research Institute moved in to remove the paint fragments, which were taken to a police laboratory outside Paris. Tests should establish the make of car, as well as the year and place of production.

The laboratory has established that debris found 30 yards before the point of impact in the tunnel came from the rear brake light of a Fiat Uno. The shards were mixed with glass from the Mercedes in which the Princess was travelling, prompting the theory that the larger car may have hit a smaller Fiat before crashing.

Witnesses have told police they saw a second car driving ahead of the limousine, which may have contributed to the August 31 accident.

□ Elysée protest: French press photographers are to stage a symbolic protest in support of ten colleagues who have been targeted in a manslaughter inquiry after the Princess's death. Several dozen photographers plan to lay their cameras at the bottom of the Elysée steps, forcing Cabinet ministers to step over them. (Reuters)

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Illegal exports threaten hope of easing beef ban

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN BRUSSELS

THE Government's drive to persuade Europe to lift its beef ban suffered a setback yesterday when the European Commission reported the illegal presence of British beef in Germany, stiffening German opposition to any easing of the 1996 embargo.

Emma Bonino, the Consumer Commissioner, said she had instructed the German authorities on Monday to close one meat processing company and take action against two others after Commission inspectors found "several dozen" tons of beef that they suspected had been fraudulently shipped from Britain. The European Union found thousands of tonnes of illegal British exports on the Continent last spring.

Yesterday's news ignited a fresh bout of anger in Germany, the country most hostile to any easing of the ban. It also fuelled German resolve at a farm ministers' council in Brussels to resist moves now under way to allow the resumption of beef exports from BSE-free herds in Northern Ireland.

Franz-Josef Feller, a German Deputy Farm Minister, said Germany had strong reservations about easing the ban. He wondered how, with inadequate checks on exports, the authorities could ensure

that British beef came only from Northern Ireland.

The remarks testified to the big political hurdles still ahead as Britain tries to follow up a finding by EU scientists last week that exports could resume for beef from certain herds but only in Northern Ireland. The province was the only British region with an adequate computerised record of its cattle.

Jack Cunningham, the Agriculture Secretary, insisted yesterday that the Government wanted the measure to apply to "certified herds" across the United Kingdom. "There was a very strong negative reaction from Germany," he said.

He did not rule out proceeding on a regional approach. "We will try to influence that decision to get the best deal for all UK farmers... but half a loaf is better than no bread," However, he was at odds with the Commission over the next step. Franz Fischer, the Farm Commissioner, said it was now up to Britain to apply for an exemption for Northern Irish herds. The British minister insisted that it was the Commission's job to act.

The Commission said it was prepared to move quickly with proposals for legislation once the British decided to apply. Under the Florence agreement, concluded between John

Major and fellow EU leaders in June last year, the EU promised to relax the ban if all scientific conditions are met. However, the consent of a majority of members is required. The Netherlands and Ireland indicated yesterday that they would support a resumption. Italy said it wanted veterinary officials to decide the issue before ministers. There was little support from other states. Dr Cunningham recognised the degree of resistance, saying he expected "battles ahead".

Before yesterday's news, German emotions were already running high in the aftermath of the discovery last summer that thousands of tonnes of British beef had been circulating on the Continent. The Commission threatened legal action against Britain last week for failing to ensure adequate controls at abattoirs. Mrs Bonino, who was put in overall charge of the BSE affair earlier this year, stoked the fire yesterday when she complained to the European Parliament that the Commission lacked resources to monitor compliance with the ban. EU inspectors had found national controls to be inadequate "so there is no guarantee of a watertight separation between the British and the non-British meat supply," she said.



Bono, lead singer of the Irish rock band U2, and guitarist, The Edge, talk to journalists after their arrival in Sarajevo yesterday to perform the first major rock concert in the city since the Bosnian war ended in 1995

Vote could put Milosevic into opposition

FROM TOM WALKER IN BELGRADE

SLOBODAN MILOSEVIC'S grip on the Serbian parliament is slipping. With votes from just one region still to be counted, Mr Milosevic's socialists have failed to win an outright majority in last weekend's election, and could be forced into opposition for the first time in nearly 50 years.

Neither is it a forgone conclusion that a socialist president will succeed Mr Milosevic. Vojislav Seselj, one of Europe's most extreme nationalists, has proved a popular choice and will contest

a run-off for the presidency with Mr Milosevic's puppet candidate, Zoran Lilic, on October 5.

There has been little celebration in Belgrade at Mr Milosevic's reverses. Many of Serbia's students and struggling middle classes are just as wary of Mr Seselj's firebrand nationalism. The diplomatic community fears likewise that Mr Seselj could spark instability in the Balkans and even wreck the Dayton peace accord.

So far the Socialists have won 98 seats in the 280-seat Parliament, with Mr Seselj's Radical Party picking up 80 seats and Vuk Draskovic's Serbian Renewal

Movement gathering 45. Mr Draskovic fell out of the race for the presidency with 787,836 votes of the 90 per cent counted. Mr Lilic took 1,286 million votes and Mr Seselj 1,025 million.

The Belgrade press has for months carried rumours of a secretive pact between Mr Milosevic and Mr Draskovic, and analysts believe the two men are determined to keep Mr Seselj's extreme nationalists in opposition. Mr Seselj and Mr Draskovic, however, are old friends and were best men at one another's weddings, and an alliance between them — putting the socialists into opposition, is not out of the question.



A villager comforts a mourner outside Algiers

Algiers in panic after rebels murder 85

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

PANIC spread through Algiers yesterday after Muslim rebels butchered at least 85 civilians in one of the worst acts of brutality in six years of fighting.

Security forces said that 85 people were burnt to death or had their throats cut and dozens more were injured in the attack on inhabitants of Bentoumi-Bentalha on the outskirts of Algiers. Residents put the death toll at between 180 and 200 people.

The assault by fundamentalists battling to overthrow the country's military-backed regime lasted into the

early hours of yesterday, and came just three weeks after a similar attack on the suburb of Sidi Rais in which 98 residents were slaughtered — the highest single official death toll in the conflict.

Until this summer the rebels had concentrated their attacks on isolated rural hamlets and the change of tactics has provoked terror in the capital with inhabitants forming vigilante groups armed with knives, clubs and petrol bombs to defend themselves.

The authorities seldom comment directly on what are termed "cowardly acts" by "criminal elements", but last weekend Ahmed Ouyahia, the Prime Minister, conceded that the climate of

fear had been caused by "terrorist acts perpetrated in August, the blackest month since 1994".

Mr Ouyahia also denied that the Government was negotiating with the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) which was leading in the 1991 general election before the Government cancelled the poll. About 60,000 people have died in the ensuing bloodshed.

A spokesman for the FIS in Paris condemned the latest massacre and said it raised "many questions" since "the areas affected had been strongholds of the FIS" which were now apparently being "punished" by the heavily-armed rebels. "We ask the United Nations Secretary-General to

intervene in the crisis," he said. The latest massacres have also added a new level of confusion. They are plainly intended to show that the militants can strike civilians living within range of military installations, but they may also reflect power struggles between rival fundamentalist factions.

On Monday another 45 people were murdered in villages in Medea province, south of Algiers, according to local reports.

Some of the rural killings may have a strong criminal element, according to analysts, with hired bands attempting to drive villagers from valuable farmland.

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CHANGING TIMES

NotWest
Interest rates

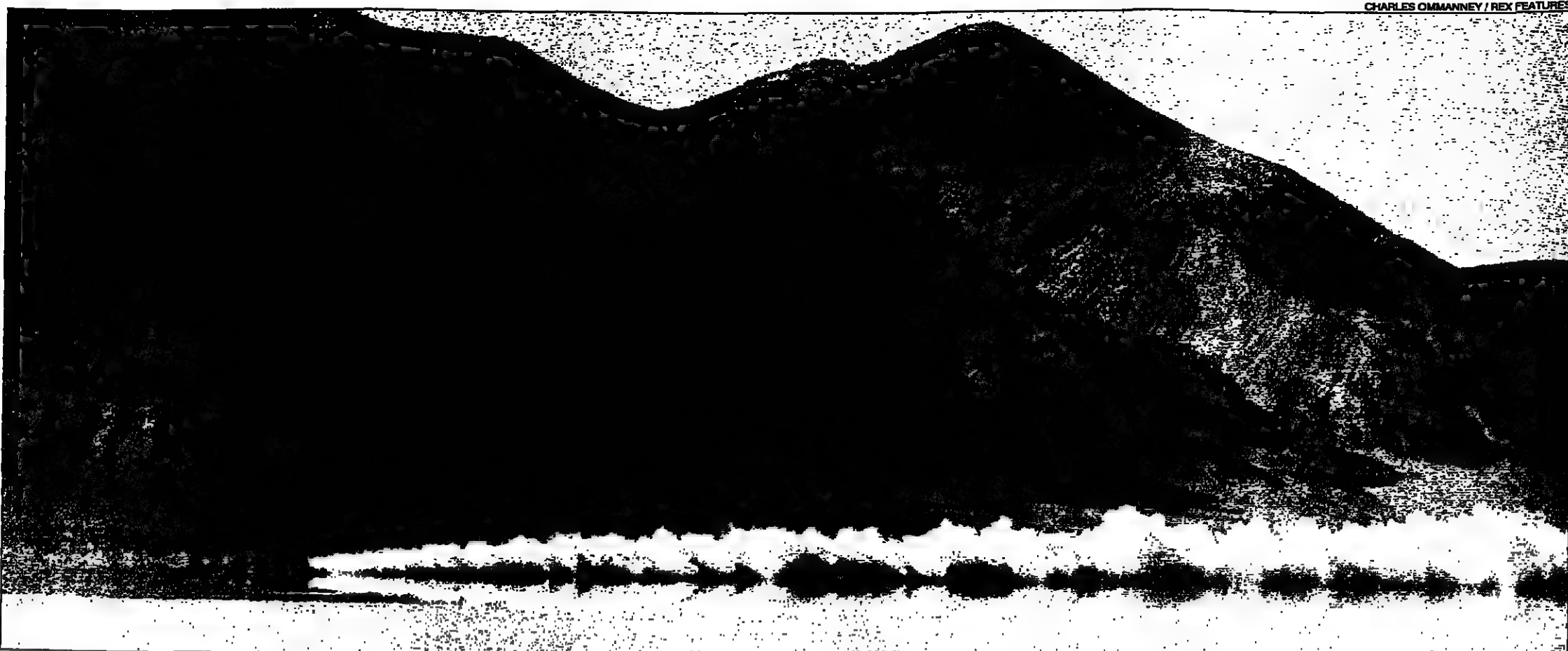
London

NotWest

**EU will
extend
social
laws to
Britain**

FROM GILES WHITTELL
AND ANJANA AHUJA
IN GERLACH, NEVADA

After each run he is debriefed immediately about how the car ran, and then is transported to the waiting press to answer questions. Then it is back to the camp to help out with the car, distribute the report on the day's



Andy Green pilots Thrust in another attempt at the land speed record in Nevada. His schedule is punishing but he has shown stamina and grace. Driving round the M25 is just as risky, he says

He is not fazed at all by his role. "I'm not a celebrity," he said, in a corner of the Miner's Club, a British watering hole in Gerlach, on his arrival here three weeks ago. "We've gone

The ten-ton *Thrust* car has a theoretical top speed of 850mph and uses active suspension pioneered on Formula

Office

—App
ice I


le's largest De
Dance d

- ☐ **Foddings:** Foreign Object Detection: combining the debris detector, stall warning device that might damage an engine by being sucked into it.
- ☐ **Togometer:** Literally, "to go" meter; cockpit gauge telling driver distance to go to end of run.
- ☐ **Aoogah button:** knob in pit station mobile communications unit that activates warning claxon with a distinctive "aoogah" sound.
- ☐ **Pit station:** roped-off position on lake bed ten miles from Gerlach where cars are stored and maintained.
- ☐ **Mazola:** slang usage of popular brand name, in this case meaning high grade oil for aero engine hydraulics.
- ☐ **VIP One:** Richard Noble's radio call-sign at Black Rock.

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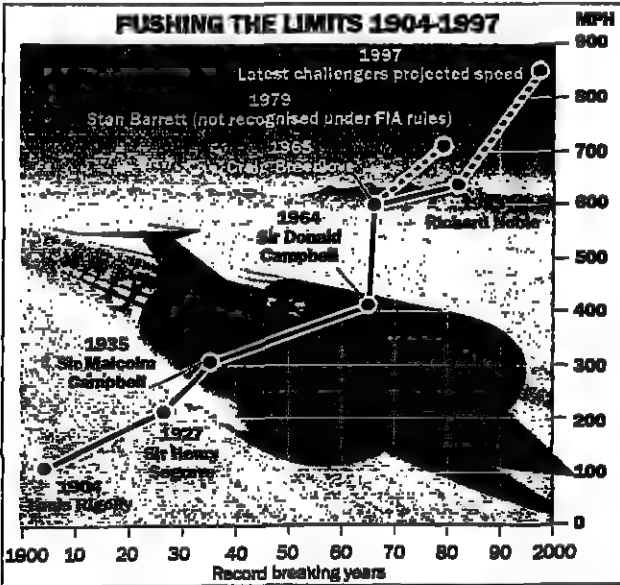
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Green: his poise has earned him the reputation of an automaton among the locals



Mir crew uses scrap to repair computer

The spokesman said a video link-up was planned to discuss the situation on Mir and preparations for the Atlantis flight. Nasa would then tell the Russians whether it would allow the shuttle mission to go ahead. (Reuters)

NatWest Interest rates

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Premium Secured	10.00%	10.47%
Special Unsecured	15.75%	16.94%
Special Secured	14.75%	15.79%
Standard Unsecured	21.00%	23.14%
Standard Secured	20.00%	21.94%
Gold Plus	11.00%	11.57%
Advantage Premier Loan	9.75%	N/A
Advantage Premier Overdraft	10.00%	10.47%
Graduate Loan (with effect from 6th October)	8.50%	N/A
Graduate Overdraft (with effect from 6th October)	9.50%	9.92%

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Cook clashes with senator over UN debt

FROM JAMES BONE IN NEW YORK

ROBIN COOK, the Foreign Secretary, got into an ugly spat with a powerful right-wing American senator yesterday after insisting that Washington should pay its debt to the United Nations "in full and on time".

A spokesman for Senator Jesse Helms, the North Carolina Republican who chairs the Senate foreign relations committee, described as "absolutely not helpful" Mr Cook's criticism of Congress's refusal to pay off all of Washington's \$1.5 billion (£937 million) in UN arrears.

In a tart message to Congress, Mr Cook had said during a speech to the UN General Assembly that every country should pay UN dues based on its share of the global economy. "It is not equitable that some members pay their contributions while others do not," he went on. "Britain pays in full and on time. Britain expects every country, however large or however small, to do the same."

Mr Helms, with Democrat Senator Joe Biden, is the architect of a compromise proposal that would repay \$900 million of the American debt on condition that Washington's contributions are cut from 25 to 20 per cent of the UN budget over the next three years. Britain pays 5.6 per cent of the UN budget. The United



Cook and Albright meet in New York

States accounts for about 27 per cent of world economy.

British officials say the so-called Helms-Biden package is inadequate and are pressing the Clinton Administration to get Congress to sweeten the offer. Mr Cook discussed the financing controversy with Madeleine Albright, the Secretary of State, over dinner at the British Ambassador's home in New York on Monday.

Marc Thiessen, a spokesman for Senator Helms, said that the bipartisan proposal before Congress deserved support as a genuine effort to reform the world organisation and put its financing on a stable footing.

The brusque Mr Cook had a disastrous meeting with the stately Senator Helms in

Washington in May, which the senator interrupted after only 20 minutes of the scheduled half an hour because he found the Foreign Secretary's manner too abrasive.

A congressional source described the encounter as "increasingly unpleasant" and said the two, of different ideological stripes, had "disagreed disagreeably". The row flared again when a British official, travelling with Mr Cook in New York, said the Foreign Secretary knew how difficult it would be to get Congress to improve its offer on UN funding because he had "spent half an hour in a room with Senator Helms".

In his speech to the UN, Mr Cook called for progress to be made on financial reform at the UN by the end of the year so that the organisation "will be able to get on with its job". He also threw his weight behind a Malaysian proposal to add five new permanent members to the 15-nation Security Council, and called for a vote on the plan this autumn.

Under the proposal, Britain, one of five existing permanent members with power of veto, would be asked to withhold its veto for five years while the precise status of the new permanent members was worked out.

Leading article, page 21

Divers hope to identify pirate's flagship

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

THE British naval officer who captured Blackbeard in 1718 beheaded the world's most notorious pirate and hung his bloody visage as irrefutable proof from the bowsprit of a warship.

At the end of next week, North Carolina archaeologists hope to explore the shallow depths of the Atlantic Ocean in search of equally convincing evidence of the English pirate's final legacy.

They hope to establish beyond doubt that a mound of waterlogged timbers and rusting metal on the sea bed near Beaufort is the *Queen Anne's Revenge*, the flagship with which Blackbeard terrorised waters from the Carolinas to the Caribbean.

The story goes that the 103ft vessel, stolen a year earlier from the French, sank in June 1718 after hitting a sandbar. Blackbeard is said to have told his lieutenants to go ashore, meet the Governor and ask for a pardon.

He then ordered his remaining crew to haul the treasure and cargo from the *Queen Anne's Revenge* to a smaller sloop with which he continued to pillage until he was captured and beheaded by Lieutenant Robert Maynard five months later. The shipwreck, in about 20ft of water less than a mile off shore, is convenient for archaeologists from the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort who, depending on weather conditions, aim to start removing sand from the hull next month.

Experts have described the ship as the most important discovery of its kind in 20 years — only the second pirate ship to have been found off the US coast. The marine archaeologists are 80 per cent certain it is the Blackbeard flagship. Everyone who has visited the wreck agrees that it is bristling with cannon and other artefacts. During two dives last year, a small but impressive collec-



Blackbeard, a bloodthirsty ogre who would light his whiskers with cannon fuses

tion of items was retrieved, including the brass barrel of a blunderbuss, a 24lb cannonball, and a bell inscribed with the date 1709.

"Nothing we have says 'this definitely is the *Queen Anne's Revenge*' but everything looks right," said Richard Lawrence who runs the state's underwater archaeology department.

"The sooner we can get back to the wreck and make that determination, the sooner all things, like funding, will come into focus."

It may take five years to establish the vessel's identity but the discovery of the *Queen Anne's Revenge* could

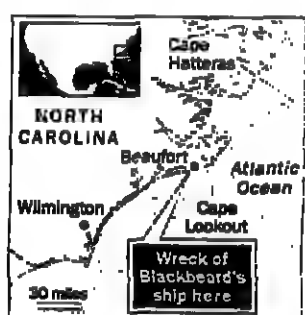
significantly alter what is already known about Blackbeard and others who belonged to the golden age of piracy in the 18th century.

Although Blackbeard has been assumed to be the

nickname of Edward Teach, scholars remain uncertain whether his name was Thatch or Teach, or whether he was born in Bristol, London, Philadelphia or Jamaica.

While historical records are sparse, the mythology is enough. He was an ogre, tall, bloodthirsty, with a booming voice, savage appetite and a bushy black beard that hung down to his belly. He would often twist it into pitgalls and light it with cannon fuses.

His legacy has already brought millions of tourists to the North Carolina coast where he died off Ocracoke Island, near Cape Hatteras.



WORLD SUMMARY

20,000 flee fighting in Cambodia

Phnom Penh: An estimated 20,000 new Cambodian refugees are reported to have fled to Thailand to escape fighting in western Cambodia (writes Caroline Gluck).

The Government says the clashes followed a dispute over territory among former Khmer Rouge guerrillas who defected to the Cambodian Army last year. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is currently assessing plans to repatriate some of the 25,000 Cambodians who crossed into Thailand last month.

Tour bus tragedy

Vienna: An Austrian motorist died and 11 British tourists were injured, one seriously, when their tour bus reversed in a car park, partially blocking a lane of the highway near Regau, 100 miles west of Vienna. The rear of the coach was struck by a car on the highway, killing the driver. (AFP)

Appeal backfires

Monticello: Aundra Atkins, 18, convicted of the murder of a British tourist in Florida in 1993, was given a life sentence on appeal, overturning his original 27-year sentence. Atkins, who had pleaded guilty to second-degree murder, appealed on a technicality. His lawyer said the longer sentence was inappropriate. (AP)

New runway

Paris: France decided to double the number of runways at Charles De Gaulle airport north of Paris rather than build a third airport to handle the capital's rising volume of air traffic. Jean-Claude Gaysot, Transport Minister, vowed to do more to lessen aircraft noise to placate angry residents. (Reuters)

Direct line to jail

Buenos Aires: Hector Hugo Marcone, 40, a university student, was detained for making almost 2,000 threatening phone calls to businessmen and leaders of Argentina's Jewish community, federal police said. (AFP)

Anti-paparazzi actor left out of the picture

New York: Photographers staged a protest against George Clooney, the actor and anti-paparazzi campaigner, by refusing to take his picture as he arrived for the premiere of his new film *The Peacemaker* (James Bone writes).

Clooney, who plays Dr Doug Ross in the American television series *ER*, was booed by about 60 photographers outside Manhattan's Ziegfeld Theatre.

The actor organised a boycott of Hollywood stars from a major studio because of intrusive coverage by one of its tabloid television programmes and after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, he accused the paparazzi of behaving like crack cocaine dealers.

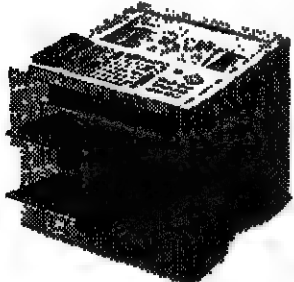
Celebrity photographers who attend staged events such as film premieres are angry about being grouped with "stalkers" who pursue stars in their private lives.



Clooney: arranged Hollywood protest

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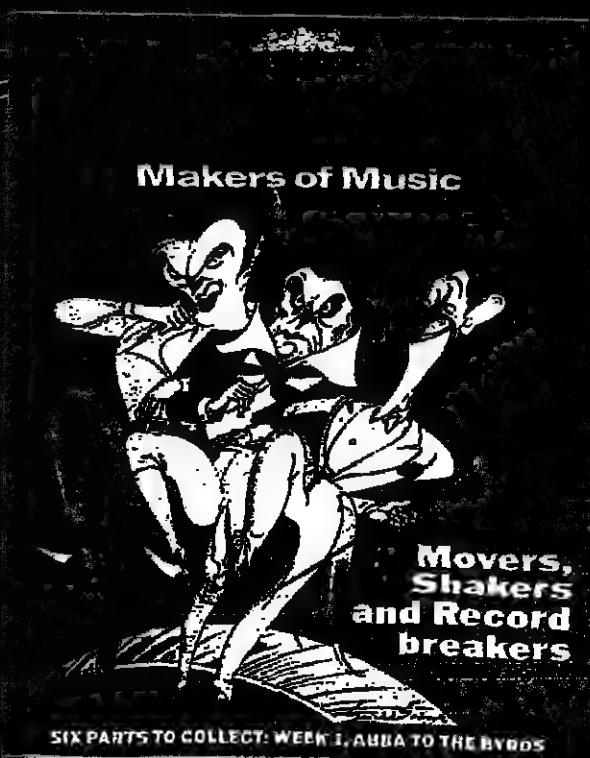
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Li Peng tells West to help the poor

FROM JONATHAN MIRSKY
IN HONG KONG

IN A speech filled with almost extinct Maoist rhetoric, Li Peng, the Prime Minister of China, told the World Bank yesterday that the West must stop giving orders to the underdeveloped world and listen to its demands.

Mr Li's speech, a vintage example of his hard-line grim-visaged style, contrasted with the address the night before by Zhu Rongji, the Vice-Premier, who delighted his audience with his wit and charm.

As the Chinese saying goes, seeing it once is better than hearing about it a hundred times. Mr Li said. The audience was left in no doubt that while in economic affairs China was rapidly relaxing and reforming, in politics it remained as rigid as Mr Li's body language.

Mr Li said the developing countries "have freed themselves from imperialist and colonialist domination and won national liberation and independence after centuries of foreign oppression and enslavement". At this moment in his speech he looked up to give his first and only smile.

The rest of his speech was aimed generally at the West and at the United States in particular, as the Americans in the hall — where Mr Li last appeared in Hong Kong for the handover ceremonies — commented afterwards.

The prosperity of a small number of countries, Mr Li noted, "cannot last long on the basis of the poverty and backwardness of the majority of countries". To help poor countries is "a shared responsibility of the international community", which must furnish funds and technical assistance.

Aide who was sacked by Clinton begins his revenge

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT CLINTON last night suffered the first instalment in the revenge of Harold Ickes, the sacked senior aide whose copious notes may hold the key to irregular White House fundraising for the Democratic re-election effort.

A memorandum leaked yesterday indicated that Mr Clinton called a wealthy Californian businessman from the White House and received a \$50,000 (£31,000) campaign donation two weeks later. The strongest evidence yet to surface that the President tried to raise money from the White House, a violation of federal election law, the note may be the start of a vast treasure chest of information kept by Mr Ickes during his four years as Deputy Chief of Staff.

In one corner, Mr Ickes had scrawled the words "BC called", referring to Bill Clinton. He had ringed the name of John Torkelson, an investment banker from San Diego, and written beside his name, "50,000" and "25, 25". Within

two weeks of the 1994 memorandum, Princeton Venture Research, Mr Torkelson's company, had sent two cheques, each for \$25,000.

The emergence of the note came as Janet Reno, the Attorney-General, launched a 30-day inquiry to determine whether an independent prosecutor should review all calls made by Mr Clinton and Al Gore, the Vice-President. Mr Gore has admitted making 46 calls from his White House office while the President has repeatedly claimed he has no memory of making any such solicitations.

But it is the role of Mr Ickes which may prove pivotal in both the Justice Department investigation and Senate campaign finance hearings. He appeared in private before the Senate this week but has yet to be called publicly.

Republicans in the Senate, employing documents from both the files of the Democratic National Committee and from Mr Ickes, have also compiled strong evidence that a series of 103 political coffee meetings at the White House were staged to raise \$36.4 million. That may be just the tip of the iceberg.

For 25 years, Mr Ickes, 58, has been a close friend of Mr Clinton. He has been caught up in almost every scandal from Arkansas to Washington and described himself in the White House as the "director of the sanitation department".

He was unceremoniously sacked after Mr Clinton's re-election, a pawn in the hiring of Erskine Bowles, the more conservative new Chief of Staff.



Ickes: his memo hints at illegal fundraising

Elderly nuns defy Vatican eviction

Madrid: A group of rebel Spanish nuns yesterday became squatters in their own convent after refusing to obey Vatican authorities who have demanded that they move out (Giles Tremlett writes).

The five elderly nuns yesterday remained ensconced at their Convent of The Assumption in the town of Espinosa de Henares, near Madrid, after ignoring a Vatican order for

them to leave at midnight on Monday. A church spokesman said the nuns were too old to keep the convent going and warned that they would be evicted in a month's time if they continued their sit-in. The nuns have been told they also face expulsion from the Order of the Poor Clares.

More than a hundred convents are estimated to have closed their doors over the

past 20 years as older nuns have died and the supply of young novices has dried up. Some 700 convents remain, but these are being slowly shut down or merged.

The nuns at Espinosa de Henares, aged between 50 and 90, have become popular heroines, though some of them have spent more than 50 years cloistered inside the convent and have never been seen.



Schoolgirls in Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysian capital, wearing masks to protect themselves against the haze

Haze forces emergency in Sarawak

BY OUR FOREIGN STAFF

THE haze overhanging much of South-East Asia reached new danger levels yesterday as 2,000 Malaysian firemen prepared to leave for Indonesia to help tackle the jungle fires that have caused the smoke and led to a declaration of emergency in Sarawak. The Malaysian Government is considering evacuating the entire populations of Sarawak and Sabah, its two provinces in Borneo.

The density of the haze, which has reduced visibility to arm's length in

Kuching, the capital of Sarawak, and in many other towns has forced airports to close and prevented relief workers and supplies from reaching those affected. Reports said more than 5,000 people in Sarawak have sought medical treatment.

The pollutant index in Kuching yesterday reached 339 — well over the 500 level at which the haze is considered very hazardous. An index of 350 is equivalent to smoking 20 cigarettes a day.

In bustling Kuching, schools and most businesses were closed. Mike Derianto, a factory owner, said: "No one goes outside

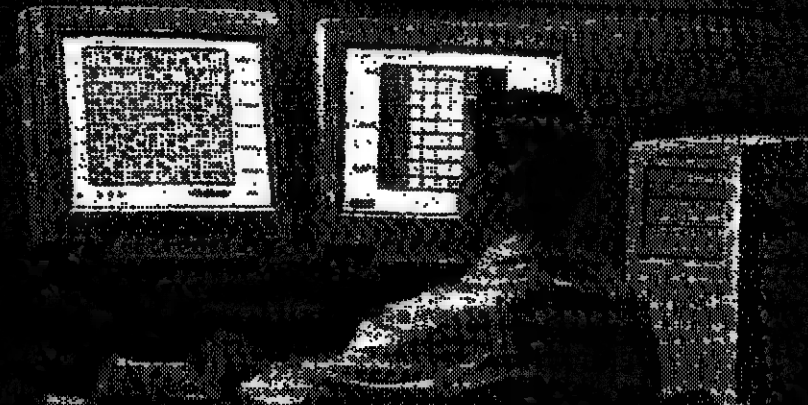
unless they have to. And everything smells and tastes of smoke."

In Kalimantan, the Indonesian half of Borneo, an official in Balikpapan said: "We are not sure whether the Malaysian firemen will be able to get here."

Environmental movements in Indonesia blamed the Government for not being strict enough on plantation owners who have cleared and burnt at least 750,000 acres of forest in the past two months.

The Foreign Office advised British tourists to Malaysia to "limit outdoor activity" if travelling to affected areas.

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JANE SHILLING GETS DRESSED

A longing for something fancy

There are, I dare say you will have noticed, an awful lot of Clean Lines about this season. Sharply cut little jackets, and skirts abruptly curtailed like the petticoats of the old lady in the nursery rhyme, and acres of minimalist tailoring.

This is not a look that comes very easily to an English girl. It requires a good deal of maintenance, for a start. In France and America, Doing

When men see us in heels and pinstripes, they feel all funny

Neat presents no problem. Whether more *soignée* (the French), or just more hygienic (the Americans) than the rest of us, these are nations where attractiveness is perceived to be in direct proportion to the amount of effort put in. The brushing of the hair, the manicuring of the nails, the painstaking application of foundation and powder and lipgloss, the rounding up of matching bag and shoes and toning (but not matching) scarf and gloves are second nature in Paris and New York.

In England, however, we do not feel quite comfortable with all that time spent in the beauty parlour which could more usefully be employed elsewhere — planting wall-flowers, writing novels, out on the raz with our girlfriends. Why on earth (we think) pay a fortune to some ninny in a white overall to varnish your fingernails when you can just as easily do it yourself, while gleaning all the latest scandal down a red-hot telephone line from your friend Amanda?

Besides, our husbands and boyfriends are ambivalent about our attempts at Doing Neat. They think uniform chic is a jolly good thing in its proper place — on Wrens, and

policewomen, and nurses, and Brown Owls, and other such figures of masculine reverie. But when they see us striding about in spike heels and razor-cut pinstripes, peg-tops with two-inch turnups it makes them feel all funny.

This is not, in itself, sufficient reason for backing away from a sharp new look. But it is a fact that, at the bottom of the soul of the most dedicated British minimalist, there lurks the longing for something Fancy. No doubt the origins of this passion for fantastical little bits of lace and velvet and embroidery can be traced back to the Englishwoman's childhood — the treasures of the dressing-up box and, in the case of embroidery, the hours spent working cross-stitch dailies on tray-cloths and repeating one's initials in lines of wobbly chain stitch on aprons and shoe bags and domestic science overalls.

But embroidery possesses other virtues besides childhood nostalgia. It has, like pearls, the generous quality of making one look instantly prettier. Simple embroidered skirts and shifts have a care-free glamour that is the very opposite of studied. And for all its apparent delicacy, embroidery is durable stuff. A child's jammy fingerprint, or a cigarette carelessly welded are death to a pristine white shirt. On an embroidered dress (one discovered at Oxford, perhaps, rather than the pricey gems shown here) they fade into the design, appearing, if they show at all, as no more than honourable battle scars — or you could always revive your old skills and embroider another little flower around the mark.



Lilac beaded skirt, £275 by Matthew Williamson at Browns; cranberry cashmere cardigan, £395, Cerruti 1881; cerise top from Portobello Market; silver insect necklace, £75 from Detail, Symons Street SW1; gold bag, £210 by Matthew Williamson at la Mode, Hans Crescent SW1



Brown embroidered leaf skirt, £173 by Gherani Strik at Matches; nude and black embroidered bird cashmere tank top, £304 by

Clements Ribeiro at Selfridges, London W1; antique silver charm necklace, £120 by Detail, Symons Street SW1

Embroidering on a theme

Try delicate decoration for a look that is sweet and sharp, says Style Editor Grace Bradberry



Lilac and gold embroidered bouclé skirt, £565 by Colette Dinnigan at Browns, South Molton Street W1; purple cashmere tank top, £320 by Rebecca Moses at Browns; pink rose beaded choker, £375 by Erickson Beamon, Elizabeth Street SW1



Gold stretch camisole top, £149 by Cerruti 1881; black and gold lace embroidered skirt, £468 by Elspeth Gibson; black velvet metal spike heels, £230 by Gucci. Photographer: Ryan Sullivan; stylist: Deborah Brett; hair: Clm Mahony at The Industry for Shipton, Leighton and Lowe; make-up: Jochen Fuchs; model: Caroline Salisbury at Models 1

► REWARDING TIMES ◀

Your chance to see the best of London Fashion Week

To celebrate London Fashion Week, *Times* readers are offered exclusive tickets for catwalk shows to be held at the Natural History Museum, London SW7, from October 1-3, 1997 for only £14, with a limited number of front row seats for £25.

Vidal Sassoon presents *The Private View*, featuring the clothes of 20 top British designers, including Amanda Wakeley, Ben de Lisi, Ally Capellino, Clements Ribeiro, Pearce Fionda, Workers for Freedom, Nicole Farhi and Helen David, right. The shows, which support Macmillan Cancer Relief, will unveil the designers' autumn-winter collections and give a preview of spring-summer 1998 collections.

THE SUNDAY TIMES
FESTIVAL
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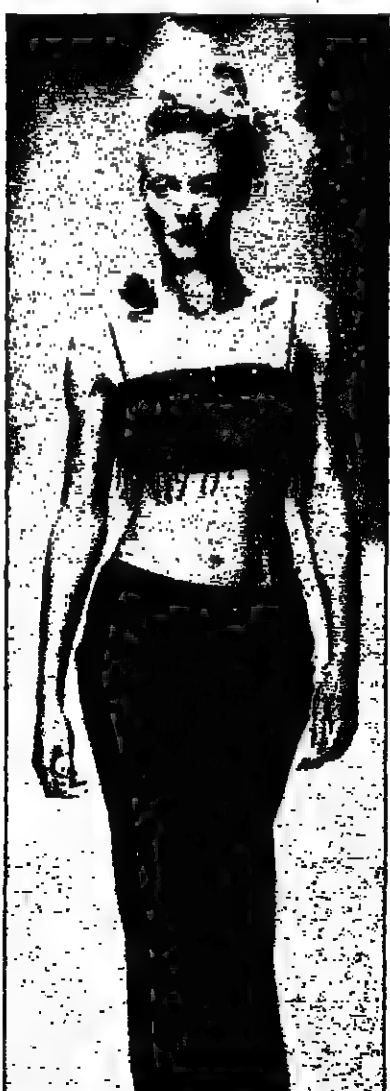
Visitors will have the chance to purchase discounted end-of-season clothes courtesy of BAA McArthur Glen, the designer-outlet specialist. Every reader who attends a show will be given a Vidal Sassoon goodie bag.

The catwalk show times are: Wed Oct 1, 6pm and 8pm; Thurs Oct 2, 12noon, 2pm, 4pm and 6pm; Fri Oct 3, 12noon, 2pm, 4pm, 6pm and 8pm.

Two exclusive fashion forums

Key figures from the fashion world discuss the future of British fashion on Saturday, October 4, in two fashion forums (£7.50, students £5). Forum One: *The Industry*, at 1pm, will address the balance between creativity and commercialism and how those interested in a career in fashion can make an impact. Following that, Forum Two: *The Image*, at 4pm, focuses on fashion's relationship with the media and role in society and asks what inspires designers. Speakers include Colin McDowell, fashion historian, Vidal Sassoon, Hetta Scherman of Models 1, Wayne Hemingway, creative director of Red or Dead, and designers Oswald Boateng and Roland Klein.

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TM 297

Meditation, mysticism and magic

Holistic practitioners can give the impression that enlightenment is only a head massage away. But glimpsing wisdom takes a little longer, says John Lloyd

The audience, faced with an invitation to be sexy, split into those who bolted for the door and those who stayed and tried their best. The teacher, Leonora Lightman, had told them how to (as the name of the talk had it) "open up to ecstasy": she had described how the sexual act made the partners in it whole — as the female part received and the male part gave. She demonstrated, with sweeping arm gestures, how the male gave through his member to the woman through her member to her heart — and how the woman gave from her heart to the male heart, thence to the male member and thus completed the circle. She completed her lecture by asking the audience to choose a partner and repeat the gestures with each other. Hence the exodus of some half of the audience: though the remainder seemed to enjoy the experience.

Lightman had used striking language. She said that in the transformation of sexual energy into love — the method is known as tantra — the partners had no need of being beggars, pleading for favours — but become gods or goddesses, kings and queens, divinely or regally bestowing sexual energy upon each other. Sex was not an end in itself, but a way to find wholeness, balance and peace.

It was terribly easy to mock. Sex is still funny in Britain, and the collision of images of kings and queens coupled in joyful meditation with the reality of the audience — some dowdy, some unkempt, all sweating in the heat of the room — was to invite thoughts of some national *Carry on* Tantra romp.

The session was given on the curtained stage of the old Camden Town Hall towards the end of August, part of a

weekend Holistic Festival. The big hall beyond the stage was full of other occasions for mockery — such as Chris Cosselin, dressed in embroidered doublet, who talked about the magic world of the Celtic fairy and sold tapes of his stories set against medieval music; a stall which warned us that we were harmlessly deluding each other and amusing the rational interloper. But something nags at the mind, as that conclusion begins to form.

First, though the people who are seeking to cajole you to buy, or be mas-

sed, or share your miseries with them can be hard to take, others are impressive enough: straight talking, not hustling, clearly convinced by their own particular medium and its message. Secondly, their various messages tend to make one composite message —

which is that there is more in the mind and body than modern life allows one to discover and deploy, and that a few techniques can help to release these hidden mental and physical treasures.

Quite a lot of it is common sense. Even the tantric sex sessions are telling you to pay attention to what you are doing, and try to do it wholeheartedly, without being crippled by inhibition or allowing your activities to become routine and empty of meaning. Throughout the wafts of incense and the blandishments of the meditation hucksters could be heard the tones of everyone's grandmother or mother, telling you to slow down, eat properly and slowly and make sure you know it's right before you take the leap.

Before much of this hugely varied holistic world, the interloper finds himself bemused, with an obscure sense that there may be something there, or even that there must be something there, and maybe



A latterday hippy at Glastonbury. Even as the holistic world is still wrapped about in Sixties hippy exclusivism at one extreme, it seeks to insert itself into the "straight" world at the other

he could experience it if he could suspend scepticism and let it flow in.

But increasingly, the holistic world flows in anyway: even as it is still wrapped about in Sixties hippy exclusivism at one extreme, it seeks to insert itself into the "straight" world at the other. The Holistic — or "New Age" — publisher, Brainwave, puts out two information books — the thick *Holistic London* and the vast *Holistic Marketing Directory*: they list 50 types of psychotherapies, 60 types of

body therapies, hundreds of shops, services, communities, centres, workshops, retreats, holistic holidays, foodshops, journals, homeopathic pharmacies, air and water purifiers, biofeedback machines and darning agencies.

These directories, and the Holistic Festival, point to a world which has burgeoned hugely since the realisation that God was dead and had, by dying, cleared a space for a multiplicity of gods — whether at the apex of a hierarchy of masters looking after each

planet or capable of being emulated by partners in tantric sex sessions. On the market test to which we subject everything, it was working well — more and more people were buying more and more things, services and enlightenment from more and more merchants, therapists and gurus. Surely that means that some of these people are being satisfied — finding their lives enriched?

But it cannot. In the end, shake off the scent of latter-day shamanism: of a world in

which enlightenment is only a head massage and the intonation of a few "oms" away. In groping back for a "natural" way to live, through the encrustations of modern living and mass consumption and mechanistic science, the holistic practitioners are trapped between their newfound marketability and the realisation — which some must have — that if they are to propose anything of worth, it must come with the warning that this is a lifetime's endeavour. Faith in a hierarchy of

interplanetary masters does not come easy; or if it does, it merely confirms the apparent kookiness of the belief.

I met, last year, two women who had sat in wooden boxes for the three years at a Buddhist monastery in Scotland. One of them said afterwards that she felt a little better, clearer in her mind, but still had a long way to go before she glimpsed wisdom. One can be over-impressed by stamina, or courage. But it seems right that wisdom takes a little longer.

MEDIA

Training reporters how to survive in a war zone
Pages 23,24

Shameless self-publicity + Labour's pay poser + Age of enjoyment + BBC blunder

Currie's cruel try at spice

"THERE is no good time to announce something like this," says Edwina Currie, announcing the end of her 25-year marriage as she proceeds on the publicity tour for her new novel, *She's Leaving Home*. But before we even get on to the delicate question of timing, we should perhaps ask why she feels it incumbent upon her to make an announcement at all.

I don't get it. Is it of such earth-shattering significance to any of us that a failed politician who's gone on to write sleazy books is getting divorced? It takes a particularly ripe combination of self-importance and insensitivity to relay your private dealings in public in quite such a way.

Then there is the way she's done it. Even if I happen to feel that her marriage and its dissolution is a private matter of no consequence to the public at large, I concede that if she and Mr Currie had split up without making such an announcement it might have generated more interest. I can see, at any rate, the logic of the

argument even if I have little sympathy with the reasoning behind it.

But still, the chosen route seems scarcely calculated to defuse gossip and comment. There is an announcement, and there is an announcement. A bald statement issued in a solicitor's dead prose is one thing; having Mrs Currie

Nigella Lawson



make arch or louché or downright brutal comments of her own is quite another.

It may show no more than a coarse sensibility to say "I wish I could give you a string of lovers, but I can't," but it is cruel to add, of her husband: "He wants to watch TV and I want to be on TV. There isn't a toyboy — I wish!" I can't imagine what sort of

person would feel it's all right to talk publicly like that. And there's worse. Mrs Currie informs us all that she knew the marriage was over when she realised she didn't miss her husband when they were parted. Once you know that he, some years back said, "Frankly, I miss her when she isn't around," you realise

as an example yet again of her admirable honesty and forthrightness. It is very much the modern way to find all honesty admirable. But surely sometimes a little dishonesty in the form of reticence might be more laudable. Reticence ain't her strong suit. She wants to shine, to be in the spotlight, and her brilliance lies in persuading us to take her on her own account. She wants to feel that she is a brainy, sexy, foxy lady, and somehow we gladly talk about this hippy, lippy woman, with a face that's a cross between a horse and a monkey (and now, I suppose, I am being cruel), as if that's what she wants.

And all this sex thing, too. Far from seeing the much-touted raunchiness as a sign of sensuality and confidence, I begin to worry for her. If you need to draw people's attention to your own sexual attractiveness, let them know about your appetites and like to refer to your house winkingly as penis-shaped, then lady, I think you got a problem.

The rise of confusion

admission that he gave back the money and ran doesn't come across as dignified but, rather, teacher's-pet nerdy.

Now it transpires that Blair doesn't think much of the plan for his Cabinet colleagues to accept the pay rise but give it to charity, for all that it's the clever, lawyerly solution. And I can't think why some of his number are so keen on it. It fudges the issue and does nothing to keep the wages bill down. But giving it to charity always seems such a noble thing to do that no one seems to mind how ignoble the motivation.

When I decided, after the birth of my first child, not to claim child benefit

because I could manage without it, everyone but everyone, no matter what their politics were, told me how wrong I was. (In fact I'm thinking of claiming it now, and for my second — but things do change.) But what I was most regularly told — even by my doctor — was that even if I didn't need the money, I should still claim it and give it to charity.

The idea of taking, and making it seem like giving, is surely as financially as it is morally confused. As far as I can see there is nothing wrong with taking what is due to one, but nothing saintly about refusing what isn't needed.

Let everyone make his or her mind up as to what to do with the prospective pay rise: morality is not enforced by committee. Not that this ever needed to be cast as a moral issue. Shades of another Major mistake here: perhaps this will be Blair's very own "back to basics".

Hampered

shock value if we profess ourselves amazed that women of 35 are not sporting flesh-coloured popsocks and a soft perm, but the real reason being 30 — and maybe even 40: that's what they say and I'm happy(fish) to take it on trust — is cool is not because being older's easier, but because we're all younger for longer than we used to be.

Older but much wiser

OH HOW I do like a survey that tells me that life is fuller, richer, happier and juicier when we are no longer in our twenties. Those of us who are no longer in our twenties could have told them that

without an NOP study on the subject. Being in one's teens is dreadful, being in one's twenties is a trial. I was relieved when I found out that turning 30 not only wasn't as painful as I had thought it would be, but life actually got better after it. But then, there's no point talking, when it suits us, as if 30 now was what 30 used to be. Of course, it increases

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Atomic principle brought to life

Canadian director Atom Egoyan tells Sheila Johnston how becoming a father brought out his humanity

For someone who makes films about alienation, disintegrating families and a startling range of sexual dysfunction, Atom Egoyan seems uncommonly well-adjusted. Confident, friendly and articulate, he is married to his long-time collaborator, the actress Arsinee Khanjian, with whom he has a four-year-old son.

But there are indications of a certain perversity: for instance, his first film after the birth of their child is *The Sweet Hereafter*. Adapted from Russell Banks' novel, it traces the aftermath of a school-bus crash that devastates a rural Canadian community. Is this not a curious choice of project for a new father?

"For parents it is the ultimate nightmare; there is nothing worse," he says. "I don't know if I would have embarked on it if I had known we were going to have a child. But now the film is completed and I have to talk about it. I find it far more difficult, especially since we take my son with us everywhere."

"I am not of the belief that, in creating a fiction about something, you prepare the path for it actually happening. In *As If*, Blake Morrison's book about the James Bulger case, there's a chapter in which he chronicles every

possible way that one might lose a child, and I found that very healing, very liberating, in a ghoulish sort of way. What I do, too, is express our worst possible fears so that perhaps we are able to understand them."

Egoyan has been edging away from low-budget, strictly arthouse movies such as *Speaking Parts* and *Family Viewing* towards superior production values and complex but (relatively) linear narratives: his previous film, *Exotica*, explored the entwined relationships between the staff and clientele of an erotic dancing club. *The Sweet Hereafter*, which won the Grand Prix (second only to the Golden Palm) at Cannes, is widely thought to be his most accessible movie yet. And although it has become a commonplace to describe his films as cerebral, detached, even frosty, one is struck by the way that, when discussing them, he constantly cites events from his own life.

Take his pervasive theme of loss (it turns up yet again in his next project, *Felicia's Journey*, adapted from William Trevor's Whitbread Prize-winning novel about a pregnant Irish girl seeking the man who left her in the lurch). "Years ago someone I knew disappeared," Egoyan says. "I read in the newspaper that she had

gone missing at a certain time, and I was absolutely sure I had spoken to her on the phone after that point and that she had told me who she was going to meet. I was investigating the police and put under hypnosis to retrieve that name. I never did, and they never found her. I was only 19, and it left a strong impression."

The biggest loss in Egoyan's own life has been his country. Of Armenian descent but born in Egypt, he moved to Victoria as a toddler and shed his own culture and language to become almost seamlessly Canadian. "This idea of how we construct ourselves is something that shaped my own early childhood," he says. "That's why in many of my films the central characters

are looking for personality, looking for some way to claim themselves."

"An Armenian journalist told me he saw the whole of *The Sweet Hereafter* as a very clear metaphor for the Armenian genocide. The more I think of it the more persuasive that is. It might well be the thing that attracted me to this story: this nation where you can't look past your grandparents is something most Armenians just accept, but it is so unresolved at a political and emotional level because the perpetrators have never really admitted that it has happened."

"There's an absurdity about it which defines a lot of what I do. Many people expect me at some point to make a film about the Armenian genocide in a literal way, but I'm suspicious of those kinds of movies, and it would make for less interesting work if I did."

That work has not only been in the cinema: Egoyan has directed extensively for television, including such popular series as *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *The Twilight Zone*, and mounted installations at this year's Venice Biennale and at the Irish Museum of Modern Art. But his present passion is for opera. His first production, last autumn, was *Salome*, for the Canadian Opera Company. "I guess they thought someone who had directed a film called *Exotica* would be a natural for *Salome*. It's all about people watching, and not receiving the gaze back,

about frustrated desire, and so it was right up my alley. I set the opera in a modern sanatorium where there's a lot of surveillance. I took away the kitschy sense of the palace that has made it unwatchable in some ways."

As one would expect, Egoyan brought to the production a film-maker's touch: *Salome's* Dance of the Seven Veils is represented indirectly by a back-projected film revealing her past. "At the turn of the last century people were bombarded with words, and so Oscar Wilde's use of language to choke the characters was a very Victorian expression of hysteria. I tried to show this court overwhelmed with images instead."

British opera-goers will have a chance to see his work next June, when he will be directing the world premiere of Gavin Bryars's new opera, *Dr Ox's Experiment*, for English National Opera. He is also writing the libretto for *Elsewhere*, with music by the contemporary Canadian composer Rodney Sharman, which will open in Toronto next spring.

Asked what attracts him to opera, his reply does not come as a surprise: "Restrictions. You have to go with what is there, and you are serving the music. I find that quite liberating. Of course, when it doesn't work it's excruciating, but there is something exciting about that too."

● *The Sweet Hereafter* opens in Britain on Friday

Magical night at the round table

MANY in the audience for the final performance of the Barbican's Les Arts Florissants mini-festival must have been anxious that the group's semi-staging of *King Arthur* would not rekindle the magic of its production at Covent Garden

two years ago. Well, it was different, but no less exhilarating. There the success owed much to the enchantment of Graham Vick's staging, but here the music carried the evening, with help from a witty new narration by Jeremy Sams.

Purcell's "dramatic opera" (1691) is really a play with music. But whereas the score reveals Purcell's genius better than almost anything else,

Dryden's play is not exactly a masterpiece. Replacing it with narrative is thus the most practical way of presenting the work today, especially when the new text feels as stylistically right as Sams's. He supplies a modern asides but sends up the plot in the gentlest of ways.

Rebecca Saire and Philip Franks, fine actors, delivered the narration engagingly. Ana Yepes's staging flowed well, with the eight singers moving in formation and the occasionally stylised slow motion. No scenery was necessary, and there were no costumes apart from the black and pearl-coloured capes which the singers donned for some choruses. But it was a pity that Yepes, who supplied the mincing choreography for herself and another dancer, also allowed some text to be spoken over the music.

William Christie led his singers and instrumentalists incisively, and with sensitive flexibility: there is surely no other ensemble so brilliant at bringing Purcell to life. The singers made a well-matched team, but Sophie Daneman, Mhairi Lawson, Gaele Méchalé, Paul Agnew and Nathan Berg stood out, Daneman especially for her radiant singing of *Fairest Isle*. (Would it make a better national anthem?)

The final patriotic but unjingoistic masque really is the high point of the piece. And the chorus of farming lads deservedly brought the house down.

JOHN ALLISON

Classic move from rags to riches

At first I did not register *Electra* at all. My eyes vaguely took in a clump of rags in a tiny alcove or cubby-hole near the top of the big grey wall at the back of the stage. But I was too preoccupied with the rest of Johan Engels's set — a slice of cracked Grecian marble dumped askew among broken Regency-period chairs, like a long-abandoned table at some bombed-out banquet — to inspect the bundle further.

Then it came to life. It clattered down and turned out to be a bent human being wearing an old robe, with rents and tears in its oatmeal-coloured wool, and a curiously childlike white mask. Then off came the mask, to reveal a ginger scrub of cropped hair, a flayed-looking face, and the overall aspect of a scavenging

vagrant, or maybe a concentration camp survivor, or conceivably a refugee from a nuclear explosion. At that point I most emphatically registered Zoe Wanamaker's *Electra*, and did not stop registering her for the next 100 minutes.

With this hauntingly contemporary yet plausibly mythic figure stumbling and sometimes crawling around the red-brown earth that covers the stage, David Leveaux's programme note about Sarajevo and bereavement seems redundant. In any case, his production also offers us a three-woman chorus whose peasant scarves and widows' black certainly suggest warzone Bosnia. Add Frank McGuinness's punchy and sometimes colloquial translation — "go easy", "good for

you", "so what?", "bosom pals" — and there is no danger of dismissing Sophocles's play as a dead classic.

Leveaux's production is balanced as well as dramatically strong. Margaret Yates actually wins a little sympathy for *Electra's* mother without in the least sentimentalising her. Her Clytemnestra is imperious, implacable, and fully capable of having murdered her husband Agamemnon. But her outrage when she remembers his sacrifice of their daughter Iphigenia is no pretence. Indeed, she leaves you feeling that bitterness and

pain have had the same effect on her as they have on *Electra* herself. For all their mutual loathing, they are linked in loss.

If Andrew Howard seems a mite underpowered as Orestes, Rudolph Walker exudes magnificent authority as his tutor, and Wanamaker never lets you forget the damage that suffering has wreaked on her heart, mind and body. She does not try to rival Fiona Shaw when it comes to hitting *Electra's* high Cs. Rather, she suggests that year upon year of misery have corroded that part of her emotional register. Grief and anger have become dogged, desperate habits, and, though she may spit in sudden scorn at the sister who counsels caution, she is always more apt to rasp or snarl than wail or scream.

That isn't to say that Wanamaker fails to rise to her emotional climaxes, or that her performance lacks variety. The scene in which she cradles the urn she believes contains Orestes's ashes is most moving, as is the reconciliation with Orestes proper. And barely has she emitted a groan of alarming intensity as Clytemnestra is killed, "strike her again!", than she is on the ground, rolling and weeping in what comes across as a weird, rather horrible mix of relief and sorrow at the death of the woman who was her greatest foe: her mother.

Altogether, a revival well worth catching when it moves to the Donmar in the middle of next month.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

GREAT BRITISH HOPES

Rising stars in the arts firmament

KARA MILLER

Age: 23.

Profession: From nine to five she is an account planner with a London advertising agency, but outside office hours she has set up A-Bit-Of-Rough Theatre Company to stage her own plays.

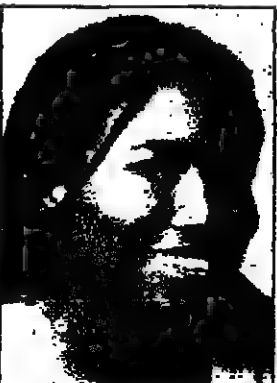
Success to date: Her one-act, *Undine*, about a Caribbean mail-order bride who comes to Britain to marry an abusive husband, was one of the surprise hits of the Edinburgh Fringe, getting four stars in *The Scotsman*, while *The Stage* declared her to be a "discovery" of the festival. After the original actress dropped out a week before opening, Miller also ended up playing the lead role.

Pretty versatile, huh? And a great advertisement for multicultural Britain. Her family came from Jamaica but she was schooled in Britain and has a law degree from Oxford. "I wrote in my spare time."

What did the critics say? "Unflinching honesty and brutal beauty" and "pure and powerful" were typical assessments. She must have understanding employers: Very. They not only gave her the time off for a three-week run but sponsored the production to the tune of £5,000.

So she doesn't plan to give up the day job? Not just yet, but she probably won't be running advertising accounts much longer. *Undine* has been bought by the BBC as a Radio 4 Monday Play for broadcast in the new year, and her latest work, *Project Fantasy*, has been entered for the Royal Court's Alfred Fagon Award.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



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Wrong foot forward

THERE is no stopping Harold King. His London City Ballet may have lurched from one crisis to another, but when it finally folded last year no one expected King to retire quietly. Now he's back with another company, City Ballet of London, and its first new production is an original staging of *The Sleeping Beauty*, a venture King must have hoped would get his enterprise off to a good start.

Unfortunately for King, a false start is more like it. There is so much wrong with this well-intended production that no amount of remedial attention can salvage it.

The production is the handiwork of Michael Rolnick, a choreographer of modest experience whose *Sleeping Beauty* commission marks the first time he has made a full-length ballet. Faced with the enormous baggage that accompanies any *Sleeping Beauty*, Rolnick has chosen to

DANCE

Sleeping Beauty
Onward, Dancers!

eschew all the conventions of Petipa's 19th-century staging. This is a *Sleeping Beauty* without tutus or pointe shoes, and without the fairytale trappings of Aurora's wedding.

Scrapping history and starting again is certainly no bad thing. Mark Morris and Matthew Bourne have enjoyed enormous success taking liberties with Tchaikovsky's two other ballets, *Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*. But they had a clear idea of what they wanted to do, and the talent to see it through.

Is Rolnick's *Sleeping Beauty* trying to say something? I'm not sure. There is an obvious attempt to place Aurora's sexual maturation at the heart of the storytelling, but Rolnick is too timorous to really go for the jugular of tradition. Morris and Bourne were also well served by their designers. Rolnick is not.

It is customary in narrative ballet for choreography to reveal character and develop plot. Rolnick's language is so poorly defined, so without purpose, that it does neither. Occasionally he produces a vibrant step or two, but phrasing and punctuation are elusive.

Aurora's choreography, and especially the Rose Adagio, whirls by in a cloud of vacuity: there is no sense of her specialness, no emotional resonance in her duets with the Prince, no physical daring. And the poor Prince — his solo in the vision scene is excruciating, awkward, tasteless. The Fairies are cheap and charmless: the mime without intelligent meaning; and there is absolutely no respect for a score filled with one irresistible surge after another.

There is little point in singling out individual dancers for special mention. Guest artist Maria Teresa del Real was always a creditable artist with an impressive CV. But even she came away from this performance looking bad. Some of her colleagues, meanwhile, looked as if they had not quite finished their training.

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Sitting comfortably? Then I'll furnish you with my tale of buried treasure

Of all the myriad potential breakthroughs towards which, down the long years of selfless columnar duty, I have attempted to direct those in a position actually to do the breaking, none has come garnished with greater expectations than today's. I really do believe that someone of irresistible influence will, at last, listen; and, having listened, act. For the first time in my life, I shall have broken through.

Thanks to the Royal Mint. The Royal Mint is at the bottom of all this. It doesn't know it is at the bottom of it, mind, the only bottom the Royal Mint is interested in is the one on my sofa; or, rather — since I sense confusion lurking here — the one underneath my sofa, ie, my sofa's own bottom. The Mint wants to get to the bottom of my sofa, because it wants to get to the bottom of a mystery involving what might be lying on the bottom of my sofa; but because the Mint cannot be everywhere at once, it has asked me to get to the bottom of my sofa on its behalf. It wants me to grope inside it for any pennies lying on its bottom. For the Mint has initiated the Every Penny Counts campaign in a bid to recover 2,400 million pennies which have disappeared from circulation, and it estimates that some 20 million have infiltrated the nation's seating.

Now, since I like to help the Royal Mint whenever I can — it has been good to me, parking meters, fag machines, public lavatories, the list is formidable — I have just finished doing what it asked, and emptied the three sofas which have been here, unquarried, since before the dawn of decimalisation; and the result is so astonishing as to have signalled the imminence of a major breakthrough. For not only have I collected over nine quid — excluding the antique value of half-crowns and giant pennies, plus God knows how much in francs, drachmas, pesetas, and several indecipherable coins with holes in — I also have eight keys, six lighters, 31 assorted sweets, including three extinct and possibly highly collectible ones, in their original, if slightly foxed, wrappers, 22 pills, for the loss of which my guests may well have suffered anything, perhaps even on their way home, from ringworm to cardiac arrest, three penknives, two dice, four teaspoons, a human molar on a chain, and several items of so intimate a nature that I shall treat them with a discretion which almost certainly lies outside their normal experience.

Now, how many sofas do you suppose inhabit these islands? There you are, then. Over the years, people have come and gone to and from this sofa, that, leaving stuff behind at every squat, until the population is now sitting on what is nothing less (though daily more) than a vast national trouser exchange. None of us has the remotest idea of what we may have lost or where we may have lost it. We know only that we no longer have things we once had: even worse, many of us, knowing only that much, will have gone back to a hotel in Rhyl to look under a bed, when we should in fact have been gutting a sofa in Nuneaton. More chaotic yet, if the Every Penny Counts campaign takes off, things will be excavated from the sofa in Nuneaton which will as a result become the property of someone else, who in due course will lose them down a sofa in Droitwich. Unless, that is, there is a major breakthrough.

Have you got there yet? Of course you have: there is only one major breakthrough which could sort all this out so that neither the Mint would ever again have to beg us to dismember our furniture in the national interest, nor would we go mad wondering what became of our bits and bobs, and that breakthrough can be made only by the deft hands of the tailoring profession. Acting on my, quite literally, lateral thinking; because the sole reason why stuff slips out of pockets and makes for the bottoms of sofas is that those pockets are on the sides of trousers. If they were on the fronts of trousers, stuff would not slip out at all.

Yes, it will involve radical cultural change, affecting the way men dress, stand, walk, scratch, all that, and it will not come cheap. It may, of course, be possible to cut costs by converting existing trousers. I cannot say, but I shall make inquiries. If I can get mine done for under nine quid, I shall consider this to have been a good day's work all round.



The dustbin of politics

As long as Liberal Democrats care only about survival, they will remain irrelevant

Autumn's political wind is always preceded by a light September breeze. It shakes no trees, yet defoliate the British Liberal Democrat Party. Paddy Ashdown stands shorn of his figural by the seaside, a sheepish smile on his face. We nod politely. We put money in his hat and hope he is well cared for in the coming year.

The Liberal Democrats are irrelevant. They have been irrelevant since the apotheosis of Tony Blair, since the modernisation of Labour, since the rise of the welfare state. The Liberals have been irrelevant for so long that they are numb to their irrelevance. They have not won national power since Lloyd George, since the rise of Labour, since the dawn of universal suffrage. They remain a vagrant spectre of a 19th-century political club. Liberals are a party without ideological or geographical roots, propped up by the media and a vague British love of fair play. We take cream with our scones, Jerusalem with our Proms and Liberals with our politics. They are nanny's comely toy. In September they get a hug.

Mr Ashdown has this week done another of his "fearless" SAS routines. He gets frightfully worked up about what government is doing and says he will "not stand for it". This week he was not standing Labour sacrificing the poor, the sick and the stupid to Gordon Brown's Treasury. He, Paddy Ashdown, never signed up to this year's Tory/Labour spending limits. The world was to see the stuff of which Ashdowns are made. He will make them tax and spend, or else...

A slight problem is that Mr Ashdown has just held congenial meetings with Labour ministers on constitutional reform, and even mentioned coalition as a "possibility". He says he is pressing Mr Blair privately for an early referendum on electoral reform. Liberalism's Land of Oz. His staff declare that Mr Ashdown's tactical genius along this Yellow Brick Road will soon be public — perhaps when he can find a Cowardly Lion and a Tin Woodman.

As for the accusation much heard at Eastbourne that he is "too cosy with Labour", Mr Ashdown is furious. His guru, Lord Holme of Cheltenham, has pointed out that party members cannot have it both ways. They cannot pursue proportional representation, with its built-in bias towards coalition, but run scared as soon as they see coalition in

practice. Besides, most Liberals work within coalitions in local government.

Yet no sooner has Mr Ashdown shown his muscles to his friends than the dark shape of Mr Blair's Peter Mandelson lowers over him, writing on this page yesterday. How dare Mr Ashdown criticise government spending targets, bellows Mr Mandelson. Does he not know they are sacred? They were drawn up by the vastly experienced Tory Government, whose boots Mr Mandelson seems to think little Ashdown is barely fit to lick. The targets were sanctified by Mr Blair during the campaign and rewarded with "the trust of the electorate". It beggars belief, Mr Mandelson implies, that a Liberal Democrat rabble could question targets prepared by that paragon of firm but fair government, that citadel of intellectual genius, the British Treasury.

Nor was this all. Mr Ashdown had better go carefully, said Mr Mandelson. He had been admitted to, indeed photographed in, Downing Street at a "Special Cabinet Committee". Such invitations do not come cheap, least of all to mere Liberals. What did Mr Blair get in return? He got Mr Ashdown's "invaluable criticism... slipping into oppositionists... promising painless profligacy". With the phraseology of a man weighed down by a lifetime in office, Mr Mandelson deplored such upstart presumption. Mr Ashdown was playing "a dangerous game". He had better look to his knees.

For Mr Ashdown. He meant well, but politics is so difficult. You have your best election since the war. You have 46 MPs, enough to fill a bus rather than a telephone booth. Your office is alive with fresh faces. Yet the posters keep telling you nothing has changed. Millions of fair-weather Tories merely used you as a dustbin last May, as many anti-Thatcherites did in the Eighties. Mr Mandelson rubbed salt in this wound. He jeered that it was only Labour's prudence on public spending that induced many Tories to desert their party.

giving a tactical vote to the Liberal Democrats rather than Labour. In other words, half of Mr Ashdown's MPs owe their seats not to his charms but to the "Mandelson coupon", an approved anti-Tory tactical vote. This is a harsh claim, though not implausible.

British Liberals have long lived on fantasy. Back in the early 1980s the then leader David Steel urged his supporters to "go out and prepare for government". In those days Liberals courted disaffection Labour voters, as it had courted Tory ones after that party's Opington nightmare in 1962. The Liberals, it seemed, would court anyone for a handful of votes. We now have the same spectacle, except that the party is spinning all ways at the same time. Charles Kennedy suggests replacing the Tories as the natural opposition to Labour. Activists in Monday's debate wanted to outdo Ken Livingstone as champions of those dispossessed by new Labour. The leadership itself will do anything, even forgo a marriage of convenience with Mr Blair, to achieve proportional representation.

This is meaningless politics. There is no search for a creed beyond the vacuities of an Ashdown speech, no grasping at a territorial or functional constituency. There is only the grim quest for survival at Westminster. The dustbin is open to all windblown votes, wet, dry, clear glass, brown or green. Mr Mandelson's article shows how swiftly the Labour Party has slid into the budgetary straitjacket inherited from the Tories. After the May election any student of public finance could have identified hundreds of millions of pounds in the British Budget available for "socialist" redistribution: in the Ministry of Defence (Eurofighter and Trident), in housing benefit, in NHS drugs, in the "training and enterprise" rackets. More hundreds of millions had been squandered in the Tories' last years, subsidising council taxes and business rates and bribing voters in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

It's a question of foot hard to the floor, hang on to the steering wheel and point," says Wales, who admits to a calling for this sort of thing. To date, the fastest he has driven a car is 130mph, in a Volvo.

HE is not always nasty. Peter Mandelson was quizzed for a forthcoming BBC programme about John Prescott, who famously likened Mandelson to a crab. What animal does Prescott resemble? "A cross between a lion and a beast," Mandelson replied, before concluding a little less glowingly: "He is a big beast."

He-mail

STEPHEN FRY used the Internet to re-establish a close relationship with his parents. And he e-mailed instalments of his frank childhood memoir — including Wildean appreciations of male beauty and accounts of adolescent thievery — to their Norfolk home, to check they would not raise a blush.

"We were not at all concerned," says his affable father, Alan. "Stephen and I are always using the Internet to chat."

The family was toasting a new book by our medical maestro, Dr Thomas Stuttaford, on the (largely beneficial) effects of drinking. Dr Tom was the Fry family doctor, and has clear memories of the

Such money reallocated could honour the Left's wildest dreams.

Mr Blair did not "inherit" these priorities. He decided not to change them. He would have a quieter start in Downing Street if he treated the Tory Budget as an extraneous discipline, not a self-imposed one. This offered Mr Ashdown a sudden stretch of "red water" between himself and Labour. Before the election he moved into it fast, saying that the Liberal Democrats would demand higher taxes to pay for education. Yet this week he has withdrawn. In a mealy-mouthed phrase, his spokesman Malcolm Bruce says he is "not in favour of higher taxes for the sake of it". No, we thought, just for education. But apparently Mr Ashdown has no stomach for such radicalism.

Labour's neo-Tory asceticism offers the Liberal Democrats an opportunity for radicalism as never before. Unless Labour itself splits, which I doubt, who will champion those dispossessed by Mr Brown's future Budgets? With tape clamped over Labour mouths, who will speak for those whose benefits are squeezed, whose rents are forced up, whose jobs are vulnerable to "labour market flexibility", who have no unions to defend their living standards? Who will speak for the public sector unions themselves, cursed at every turn by Labour ministers? These groups are poor and carry no clout.

Nor is this the only constituency going begging. Despite the Government's admirable reforms in Scotland and London, there is little sign of Mr Blair freeing local government from the armlock of centralism or from the quango state. The greatest disappointment of Mr Ashdown's leadership has been his inability to look beyond the glamour of Westminster and articulate a rigorous libertarianism. Liberals have never been convincing opponents of big government, whether for personal liberty or against centralism. Mr Ashdown has fumbled reform of the drugs laws. Last year he could not even bring himself to support an elected mayor for London.

This 1997 Parliament should be Liberalism's golden opportunity. British politics usually offers too many champions for the available causes. Suddenly there are available causes in search of champions. Yet Liberal Democrats champion nothing except their own survival. So we patronise them, pat them on the head and wish Paddy Ashdown another nice day.

Is Britain in a class of its own?

The secret of our success is inequality, says Michael Gove

Of all John Major's forlorn ambitions, from his hope in the summer of 1992 that sterling would shortly replace the mark as the ERM's benchmark currency, to his desire to leave office when everyone least expected it, no failure was as great, and no failure as deserved, as the frustration of his wish for a "genuinely classless society".

Mr Major, it must be said, did succeed magnificently in using the power of the State to effect a direct redistribution of wealth. It was a transfer of money, however, from the have-nots to the haves. The most significant of his legislative achievements was the National Lottery, and as Stephen Pollard and Andrew Adonis point out in their fascinating and comprehensive new book *A Class Act*, the lottery is an exquisite device for exploiting the limitations of the poor and subsidising the amusements of the rich. Short of drug-pushing, there is no process where the failings of the disadvantaged are used so transparently to subsidise the wealthy.

It might be counted as offensive to social justice that a Prime Minister who came to power as an egalitarian should have ended by extending class divisions. It is, however, divine justice that Mr Major should have failed so spectacularly. A Conservative Prime Minister has no business trying to create a classless society. It is as offensive to Tory principles as claiming you have no "selfish strategic interest" in keeping your country One Nation. For a Conservative to believe in classlessness is like a panther living on vegetation — so contrary to nature that it will lead to extinction.

The persistence of class as a social fact, intellectual battleground and way of selling books is underlined this week with the simultaneous publication of Adonis and Pollard's work, by Hamish Hamilton, and Lord Bauer's *Class on the Brain*, by the Centre for Policy Studies. What makes the two studies particularly worth the reader's attention is their quality in a crowded field.

That two works should appear on class in one week is unremarkable. Publishing relies on the class system to survive, and not just because it employs well-born gels at a discount. From Anthony Sampson's *Anatomy of Britain* to Peter York's *The Sloane Ranger Handbook*, bestsellers have thrived on class. Take buy degree away, untame that string and hark what discord would follow in the book market.

The huge public appetite for reading about how the other half lives only emphasises how ineradicable class distinctions are. For Adonis and Pollard, angered by "intensifying class divisions", the likely success of their volume will be bitter-sweet. It will sell because Britain wants to be reminded of its divisions and delights in all the nuanced inequalities of modern life. And far from being a masochistic impulse, another *vice Anglaise*, appreciating class distinctions is the mark of a free society and the guarantee of a better one.

Inequality is the inevitable outcome of an open-market economy and, more than that, an engine of economic growth more effective than any Keynesian demand management. As Lord Bauer points out in his brilliant polemic "Differences and distinctions do not restrict talent or inhibit economic progress. In fact, they rather promote ambition and achievement because they offer inducement, something to go for, at all levels of society."

It takes an outsider like Lord Bauer, the son of a Hungarian bookie, to recognise what generations of progressives like Will Hutton, Adonis and Pollard fail to do — the class system made Britain great. The public schools, far from holding the nation back, have been a priceless asset. It is the desire to send his son to Eton, for prestige as much as qualifications, that drives the man in the Midlands to build a better mousetrap.

In their work, Adonis and Pollard succeed magnificently on every page in showing that Britain is an unequal society but never once prove why it should be anything else. Indeed, they are honest enough to record the evidence which suggests that progressive efforts by the State to intervene in social organisation are as counter-productive as they are in economic production.

In their chapter on education, the authors record how egalitarian experiments such as comprehensive schooling and progressive teaching, which dismantled old hierarchies, replaced them with new and harsher inequalities. They quote approvingly the words of the ethical socialist A.H. Halsey: "The essential fact of 20th-century educational history is that egalitarian policies have failed."

They have certainly failed in Halsey's terms but there is, of course, nothing wrong per se in ever-greater inequality. The real test of equity, in law and in society, is the process not the outcome. A fair society is one where barriers to progress, not divisions between individuals, are as small as possible. To object to growing disparities in income is, ultimately, immoral, a genuflection to envy. Envy is a prejudice, as ugly as any, which seeks to punish another when no injury has been sustained. Snobbery, which drives men to excel and encourages the cultivation of taste, is, by contrast, a deeply moral impulse. It is a pity, for his sake, that the boy from Brixton did not recognise that earlier. If he had mounted a more spirited Tory defence of class as the goad to achievement, he might have stood a fighting chance against the Old Fettesian.

Lordly rebel

AS Gordon Brown demanded that his colleagues accept his "hair shirt" pay rise yesterday, one Cabinet minister was preparing to defy the Chancellor.

Lord Irvine of Lairg, already the highest-earning Cabinet minister, is keen to keep his full pay rise. As Lord Chancellor, he receives £140,665 a year — nearly £40,000 a year more than Tony Blair.

But then Lord Irvine is in a uniquely strong position within the Cabinet. As head of chambers, he introduced the young Tony to Cherie, his future wife. Blair is unlikely to sack his mentor.

Like the rest of the Cabinet, Lord Irvine's pay is recommended by the Senior Salaries Review Body. But while his colleagues prepare to forgo their rises, the Lord Chancellor is arguing that his remuneration should be dealt with differently.

Shortly after the election, "Derry", known by friends as a bon vivant, chose to renovate his official Westminster residence — at a cost to the taxpayer of up to £2million. And at work, as regular readers will know, he orders a civil servant to peel him oranges. Nice work...

● KEN CLARKE's shrewd move to pour scorn on the single currency is paying off. William Hague's

RAILWAY LOST PROPERTY



"Well, I've looked everywhere, but it's not here"

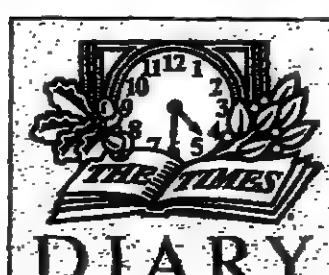
"back me or sack me" ultimatum has prompted IG Index to drop the odds on Clarke becoming Tory leader from 50-1 to 16-1. "Hague's only legacy," predicts the odds-setter, Patrick Jay, "will be as the man who wore a baseball cap to the Notting Hill Carnival."

Bottoming out

ONE of Wee William Hague's most loyal supporters is snubbing his "bonding-session" in Eastbourne next month. Peter Bottomley, MP for Worthing West, has turned down Willie's invitation to spend two days with colleagues in a five-star hotel; instead he will holiday in Spain with his daughter.

"I was a first-night supporter of William," protests the MP. "But I promised my daughter I'd take her to Spain for half-term because she's doing GCSE Spanish. We're going quietly — I don't want this all over the papers." Quite.

● WHO says the dear old Liberals have changed? The Grand Hotel in Eastbourne (£270 a night, with former guests including the Queen of Spain and Charlie Chaplin) has had to waive its strict dress code for the conference. Liberal MPs have dined in jeans, trainers and even shorts. "While Mr Ashdown wears a suit,



some seem happier in denim," harumphs my man with the trouser press. "Luckily, they've taken over the hotel, so there are no other guests to offend."

Hot wire

WHILE THE British team behind the jet-powered Thrust SSC recorded the fastest land-speed journey in history, the grandson of Sir Malcolm Campbell, who established an earlier record in *Bluebird* in 1929, is preparing to break the international land-speed record — er, for electric vehicles. Donald Wales will unveil his conveyance at Brooklands today, and hopes to reach 230mph in *Bluebird Electric*, smashing the current record of 183.075mph. Designed by the inventor of the Popemobile, the car has no gears and can reach top speed in 90 seconds.

"It's a question of foot hard to the floor, hang on to the steering wheel and point," says Wales, who admits to a calling for this sort of thing. To date, the fastest he has driven a car is 130mph, in a Volvo.

HE is not always nasty. Peter Mandelson was quizzed for a forthcoming BBC programme about John Prescott, who famously likened Mandelson to a crab. What animal does Prescott resemble? "A cross between a lion and a beast," Mandelson replied, before concluding a little less glowingly: "He is a big beast."

"We were not at all concerned," says his affable father, Alan. "Stephen and I are always using the Internet to chat."

The family was toasting a new book by our medical maestro, Dr Thomas Stuttaford, on the (largely beneficial) effects of drinking. Dr Tom was the Fry family doctor, and has clear memories of the



Showtime: Dylan and John Paul

young Stephen. "He was always such a clever little chap, witty even then," he says. "I would write notes to his housemaster saying so when he got into his scrapes."

Stone me

A PAPAL performance has rarely been so eagerly awaited. Bob Dylan, who will sing for the Pontiff in Bologna this Saturday at the World Eucharist Congress, has been asked to present his planned lyrics to the Vatican. It seems that the two performers, both of whom knocked on heaven's door recently, wish to harmonise their act, with the Pope weaving his speech around Dylan's words. Mr Dylan, I trust, will not perform a rendition of his important work *Everybody Must Get Stoned*.

P.H.S



THE UNREFORMED UN

The United Nations needs a tougher approach from Britain

Robin Cook's speech to the United Nations General Assembly yesterday was described by the Foreign Office as "a powerful call for UN reform". This was the Foreign Secretary's bid not only to make his personal mark before a global audience, but to put Britain's considerable influence at the UN behind a more dynamic and imaginative rethinking of priorities and methods than Kofi Annan, the new UN Secretary-General, has so far felt confident enough to put forward. Specifics were called for.

Mr Cook praised Mr Annan's "outstanding leadership"; he would better have complemented it by showing more of his own. A British Foreign Secretary operates under fewer constraints than the UN's chief executive officer. Mr Annan needs forceful allies willing to put the case for radicalism more clearly than he can himself.

The Labour Government has, admittedly, put itself in a difficult position to argue that the UN urgently needs to shed excess baggage if it is to concentrate on areas where demand is high and the need for its involvement indisputable. Its decision to join Unesco and cancel the British decision to withdraw from Unidoc, the UN Industrial Development Organisation, betrays a preference for the politically correct over the politically effective. The modest administrative reforms currently on offer are not sufficient to give the UN "the flexibility and efficiency it requires" to respond to 21st-century challenges.

A more radical presentation would also have won Mr Cook a more respectful hearing in the US Congress than he has achieved by a televised assault on America's non-payment of the arrears it owes to the UN. The public recall by a senior Foreign Office official of May's bruisingly unproductive confrontation between Mr Cook and Jesse Helms, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was still more

unfortunate. However true it may be that Mr Helms detests the UN and all its works, Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, has worked tirelessly with the Senate to reach a compromise under which these arrears will at last start to be repaid next year. There is much to be lost by demonising the veteran senator over an issue which has wide bipartisan support; the Senate passed the relevant Bill, which is currently stuck in negotiations with the House, by 90 votes to five.

The problem with the Bill is that it sets conditions, particularly on cutting America's future share of UN dues to 20 per cent, to which Britain and the rest of the UN object. But it is in Britain's interest to try to separate this dispute as much as possible from the business of UN reforms which are needed regardless of its financial predicament. The last Government positioned Britain to act as broker on this issue, by initiating a needed overhaul of a system of calculating UN dues so out of touch with economic reality that it seriously overcharges Russia and Ukraine while letting China and some prosperous Latin American and Asian countries off too lightly. Although the US assessment accurately reflects its share of world GDP, it may not be healthy for a global organisation to depend too heavily on a single country.

The best way to counter the prejudices of an exceptionally uninformed Congress is to convince its members, who have been withholding dues for 12 years in an attempt to force change at the UN, that this time, UN reform will amount to more than shifting the furniture. Britain has a reputation to live up to as a serious and knowledgeable operator in this floundering set of institutions. Unless the UN modernises, Mr Cook rightly said yesterday, it "will lose its legitimacy and its effectiveness". It is on this broader objective that the Foreign Secretary should concentrate his formidable energies.

THE GENE THEME

Man is born free, but everywhere is in genes

Each morning brings news of a new genetic discovery bearing on how long we will live, and how we may die. Aided by the proponents of the almighty gene, the impression is gaining ground that mankind is merely the pretty wrapping around a bunch of genes with minds of their own. Faulty genes have acquired the character of Blind Pugh's Black Spot: not only do they foretell a death, but they do so with a terrible inevitability.

This is, of course, an exaggeration, but it is widely believed. Just as hormones were once seen as the ultimate key to human behaviour, today the gene is king. Fortified by that belief, genetic testing is beginning to advance into the clinic. For diseases caused by changing a single letter in the genetic code, the tests are simple and powerful, and can be of great value to couples intending to have children and wanting to be reassured that they will not suffer from hereditary disease. For more complex conditions such as cancer and heart disease, where many genes may be involved, their usefulness has yet to be unambiguously demonstrated. They are valuable for what they tell clinicians about the causes of the disease, and they may suggest new approaches to the designers of drugs. But their value to the individual is much more equivocal.

The Advisory Committee on Genetic Testing has now produced a code of practice for private companies intending to offer such tests direct to the public. So far, the market is tiny and no abuses have emerged, making this a rare case in which the stable door has been politely closed before the horse has had a chance to bolt. Everything the committee says makes admirable sense, and it has resisted the temptation to call for statutory reg-

ulation of gene testing. It is probably right to believe that the market has sufficient checks and balances of its own to ensure that cowboys are quickly shown the door. Not only will patient interest groups and legitimate testing companies wish to preserve high standards and point the finger at miscreants, but the NHS, through its own regional genetic centres, will also be a customer for the tests and a guarantor of quality.

More difficult issues, however, lie ahead. The committee's report may well be effective in heading off abuses, but testing even when properly conducted raises tricky ethical questions. The test result may have implications that go beyond the individual tested, involving the whole family; yet to protect individual confidentiality it may be denied to some of those it could help. In a healthy individual, a bad test result can cause anxieties that cannot be alleviated because no treatment or prophylaxis is available. There may be a danger of creating an army of the unwell, people whose perception of their own health has been altered for ever by a single test. Better blissful ignorance than a half-knowledge that leaves people feeling permanently diminished.

Beyond that again there are social questions that demand answers. How are the results of tests to be handled if revealing them will make it impossible to obtain health or life insurance, while concealing them will tilt the balance unfairly against the insurance companies? Navigating a way through that dilemma is the next task the committee must face, one much harder than the regulation of testing quality which is addressed in today's report. An excellent start, then — but bigger challenges await.

DOVES AND HAWKS

The Middle East peace process can restart with the birds

The dove of peace may come to the Middle East in the form of a hawk. For at a time when political tensions between Israelis and Palestinians are at their worst since the signing of the Oslo peace accords, a small but significant attempt to overcome mistrust and hatred is being made by ornithologists. Palestinian and Israeli birdwatchers have been brought together by the plight of the lesser kestrel, a migratory hawk that nests in the Holy Land but is now so endangered that no more than 400 arrive each year.

Three months ago environmentalists on both sides decided that only by working together to protect nest sites and exchange information could they ensure its survival. The Palestinian-Israeli Environmental Secretariat is a heartening attempt to translate into good neighbourliness the promises of the peacemakers. For not only are the members of this unusual non-governmental organisation trying to save governmental organisation trying to save the kestrel; they are hoping to bring together birdwatchers, young and old, to share their enthusiasm, and in so doing, break down barriers of suspicion and mistrust. The secretariat, with Palestinian and Israeli co-directors, has already organised one expedition with 20 Israeli and 20 Palestinian children; it plans another next spring. Meanwhile, it is bringing together teachers, journalists and students for the kind of "people-to-people" involvement essential to any understanding that both peoples share the same lands and same environment. They could hardly have chosen a better

focus for their efforts. For too long the delicate plants and colourful creatures of the Middle East have been sacrificed to rapid economic growth, fallen victim to wars and their long-term scars or been destroyed by neglect, indifference and wanton gunfire. Yet the Levant is one of the most important bridges from Africa to Asia for millions and millions of soaring birds that make the long journey each year. They seek rest, water and shelter in the warm valleys; many nest there; and hundreds of species have traditionally established colonies around watering places on the edge of the desert.

Israel has no tradition of hunting; the secretariat estimates that fewer than 5,000 people, most of them Druse, shoot birds. Palestinians have been forced to stop the practice by the restriction of guns enforced under the occupation. Jordan has long had tough restrictions on hunting, and royal patronage for animal protection societies. Further north, however, the picture is bleak. Lebanon has some 500,000 bird hunters, and the annual migration turns into a ruthless slaughter. Small birds are shot for fun or as delicacies to eat, and nominal restrictions were cavalierly flouted during the civil war. The story is the same in Syria and Turkey, or further west in Italy and Malta. The new Palestinian-Israeli secretariat wants to spread a message of protection and shelter beyond the borders of biblical Palestine. In the process it is spreading a far more important message of peace and reconciliation within those borders.

Rank-and-file role in Tory choice

From Sir Julian Critchley

Sir, One man, one vote for the leadership of the Tory party is surely too high a price to pay for Mr William Hague (report, September 23 letters, 20 and 22). The franchise should be extended beyond the now narrow confines, imposed by the 1922 Committee, of 165 Tory MPs.

Ideally, it should include MEPs, ex-Tory MPs in the Lords, the officers of the National Executive Committee, and constituency chairmen. These are, of course, the very people who, in two unofficial ballots last June, voted for Kenneth Clarke.

One man, one vote has a spurious attraction. Was it not Chester who said that the difference between aristocracy and democracy is that rule by the ill-educated is to be preferred to rule by the uneducated? A vote for the leader of the party in return for a paltry annual subscription is surely a nonsense. Archie Hamilton, the newly elected chairman of the 1922 Committee, who refused in June to alter the franchise, has much to answer for.

Yours etc,
JULIAN CRITCHLEY
Conservative MP
1959-64 and 1970-97,
19 Broad Street, Ludlow, Shropshire,
September 23.

From Councillor Barry Phelps

Sir, Labour constituency parties have always been ruled from the centre. The Conservative associations, while sometimes in the gift of local bigwigs, have never been ruled from outside — and it wouldn't suit us.

Margaret Thatcher all but destroyed the Conservative Party's grass roots in the constituencies when she emasculated local government. It is William Hague's job to revive those roots, not complete their destruction by adopting the centralisation that suits Labour so well. Then the Conservative Party can regroup, rethink and reorganise for its return to power — the only thing at which we are undeniably pre-eminent.

Taking from the constituencies their right to choose their candidates would deny them their last real power.

Yours faithfully,
BARRY PHELPS
(Councillor, Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea),
25 Kenway Road, Earl's Court, SW5.
ad356@btinternet.com
September 23.

From Councillor Murray Naylor

Sir, Exasperation is the only word which I can use to describe the latest outburst of sniping and disloyalty currently besetting the Conservative Party.

I write as a constituency chairman and as a county councillor who actually won a seat on May 1, to warn those apparently so myopic that they cannot see the very real danger to the party. Unless we give reform and restructuring a chance, there could be no party to fight any elections in the foreseeable future. Can those who guide our destinies not see that the grass roots of the party are fed up with discord, dissension and disloyalty? Have they learnt nothing from the last general election?

For goodness sake let's give William Hague and his proposals a fair chance, consider them coolly and rationally, and, having done so, make our decisions and unite to rebuild the Conservative Party as the great institution that it once was.

Yours sincerely,
MURRAY NAYLOR
(Chairman),
Ryedale Conservative Association,
109 Town Street,
Old Malton, North Yorkshire,
September 23.

From Mr Beverley Morgan

Sir, Your front-page headline today states "Hague plans bigger say for rank-and-file".

Is it not somewhat ironic that, had Mr Hague's wishes been set in train at the time of the last leadership election, Kenneth Clarke rather than he would now be the Leader of the Opposition.

Yours sincerely,
BEVERLEY MORGAN,
9 Willshire Gardens,
Mill Hill, NW7,
September 23.

Court costs

From Mr Charles Evans

Sir, The Parliamentary Secretary at the Lord Chancellor's Department is right to reconsider a plan to scrap a defendant's automatic right to jury trial (report, September 11). A considerable saving in cost will be achieved if the practice of lay magistrates hearing cases is curtailed instead.

Full-time stipendiary magistrates deal with the court business with greater speed and certainty than their lay colleagues. The saving in time is reflected in reduced legal aid bills and the greater certainty in a reduction in expensive appeals to the higher courts.

As 98 per cent of criminal cases are disposed of in the magistrates' courts, is that not where savings should be sought? The public purse would benefit, but not at the expense of justice.

Yours,
CHARLES EVANS,
Goldsmith Chambers,
Temple, E.C.4.

Appeal on council 'gerrymandering'

From Mr Peter Bradley, MP for The Wrekin (Labour), and others

Sir, It is a shame that Lord Rees-Mogg ("A system in the dock", September 18) apparently has not troubled to scan the 12,000 pages of documentary evidence against Shirley Porter and others gathered in the course of the auditor's seven-year investigation into the "gerrymandering" of Westminster City Council.

If he had, as we have, his tortuous encounters with her over arts funding and canapés.

Moreover, Lord Rees-Mogg's claim that the Westminster surcharge appeal is prejudiced before it comes to court next month is simply nonsense.

The case will be decided not by a jury but by three High Court judges. In what possible way can their judgment be prejudiced by media publicity or any of the other matters to which he refers?

For our part, we trust that the court will consider the merits of the case in full, and that Shirley Porter will therefore have yet another chance to refute the mountain of evidence against her.

But this is only the latest in a long series of so far spurned opportunities, including the 13 interviews she attended with her legal representatives and the public hearing at which she declined to give evidence. In the High Court she can take the opportunity to answer the charges against her in public and face examination on her version of events.

It is typical of a sustained black propaganda campaign that even before the case has opened Shirley Porter's apologists should be seeking to cast doubt on the validity of the outcome. But we are surprised and disappointed to find so distinguished a journalist among them.

No, Lord Rees-Mogg: Shirley Porter finds herself in court not because of who she is but because of what the auditor found that she did.

As former Westminster councillors, all we ask is that at last justice be done, and well and truly be seen to be done.

Yours faithfully,
PETER BRADLEY,
KAREN BUCK,
ANDREW DISMORE,
House of Commons,
September 19.

A-level lit crit

From Mr Adam A. C. Barnard

Sir, Mrs Sharon Footerman's statement (letter, September 12) see also letter, September 17) that A-level literature candidates "are required to take copies of their set texts into the examination" is an unfair generalisation: under the Oxford and Cambridge boards, at least, only one of the four components ("Close textual analysis") is an "open-text" examination. The purpose of such a paper is to allow candidates to demonstrate a detailed understanding of the text without the cumbersome inhibition of needing to memorise quotations: a literature exam is a test not of memory but of analytical skills.

Further, candidates are forbidden from annotating blank pages. The syllabus makes clear that only light annotations in the margin of the text itself are permitted and it is the duty of the examiner to ensure that candidates have not written in "complete model answers". The questions asked in an open-text examination take into account the presence of an annotated text and deliberately aim to make candidates do some "real thinking" by asking them to approach the text in a way they are unlikely to have anticipated or rehearsed.

In my experience, having sat the exam in June, these open-text papers often prove, if anything, more challenging than "closed-text" ones.

Yours faithfully,
A. A. C. BARNARD,
3 The Terrace, Barnes, SW13.

Viscount Tonybandy

From Dr. W. Dewi Rees

Sir, Viscount Tonybandy's life was varied and fulfilled (obituary, September 23) but it was at Aberfan, in 1966, that he experienced the depths of human despair and was most fortified by his Christian faith.

As Minister in the Welsh Office he had the shattering experience of being the Government's representative during this cruel tragedy when a coal waste tip slid down the mountainside and engulfed a school where over a hundred children died. He said last year, in the foreword he kindly wrote for a book of mine,

I shall never forget stepping over the bodies of little boys and girls as rescuers dragged them from the sludge. I visited every home that suffered sudden bereavement, and the concentrated agony of weeping families has left a scar on me for the rest of my life.

Yours sincerely,
DEWI REES,
Plot Cottage, Plot Lane,
Stretton-on-Dunsmore,
Warwickshire,
September 23.

Letters to the Editor should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to a fax number — 0171-782 5046. e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

Of London walks and palace walls

From Mr Todd Longstaffe-Gowan

Sir, Whilst there is much to applaud in Mr Terry Farrell's scheme for the "Diana-isation" of London ("The royal route to the people's promenade", September 13), I take grave exception to his proposal to pull down the venerable brick walls which surround the gardens of Buckingham Palace and St James's Palace.

These great early 19th-century walls are among the last survivors of the high protective barriers which once screened London's aristocratic townhouses from the dirt and noise of the metropolis.

The gardens of Burlington House, Devonshire House and Lansdowne House were all enclosed in this way, and at Harcourt House in Cavendish Square — once described as "rather like a convent than a residence of a man of quality" — 80ft high screens of iron and ground glass screened the garden from the outer world.

Like the mansions they once protected, almost all have been swept away. By all means make the gardens of the royal palaces more accessible to the public, but in doing so respect the historic features which have ensured their survival up to the present day.

Yours sincerely,
TODD LONGSTAFFE-GOWAN
(Editor, *Journal of the London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust*),
44 Dalmeny Mansions,
77 Anson Road, N7,
September 14.

From Mrs Marcus Agius

Sir, Mr Edward Leigh, MP (letter, September 17), and some other politicians appear to forget that London is a living city where traffic needs to flow as freely as possible.

The horrendous jams of the last few days, when The Mall and roads into Hyde Park have been closed to cars, cannot and should not be a permanent part of London life.

Having the great capital at a standstill is not a fitting part of any tribute to Princess Diana.

Yours sincerely,
KATE AGIUS,
7 South Terrace, SW7,
September 17.

The Booker booked

From Mr Ian Brammer

Sir, The title of a Booker prize novel (Mr John O'Byrne's letter, September 19) will depend more on timing than on plot.

Before the competition *Great Expectations* or *Vanity Fair* would be appropriate. After the judging the unsuccessful authors could choose between *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Hard Times*, *Decline and Fall* and *The Long Goodbye*. The winner would select *Victory* or *Brave New World*.

Yours faithfully,
IAN BRAMMER,
Cesterbridge House,
Rainow, Macclesfield, Cheshire,
September 19.

From Mr Tim Nagley

Sir, In his search for a title, Mr O'Byrne should perhaps avoid *The Booker Book*, which was used by Simon Brett in 1989 as the title for his most entertaining novel about an enterprising first-time novelist attempting to win the prize.

Yours faithfully,
TIM NAGLEY,
29 Hillfield Road, NW6.
timnagley@aol.co.uk
September 19.

Pennies for heaven?

From Mrs Ingram Lloyd

Sir, I was somewhat mortified to discover (report, "Royal Mint offers a thought for your pennies", September 17) that our church may be unwittingly adding to the national shortage of pennies.

Our collection of "mites and groats" in small containers has been ongoing for several years. The monthly count of pennies is tedious, but I will endeavour to speed up the recycling of our pence back into the national coffers.

With apologies,
INGRAM LLOYD
(Sulgrave Church mites and groats co-ordinator),
Church Cottage,
Sulgrave, Banbury, Oxfordshire,
September 17.

Taste on tap

From Lieutenant-Commander J. H. McGivering, RNR (retd)

Sir, Mr Garry Garrard (letter, September 23) can improve the quality of his tapwater by adopting very simple procedures that can be carried out at home to produce excellent drinks which I have enjoyed, at the appropriate times, for many years.

1. Add boiling water to tea, pour into a cup containing a little milk; add sugar if desired.

2. Pour cold water into a tumbler containing a few drops of Angostura and three or four tablespoons of gin.

Your obedient servant,
J. H. MCGIVERING,
32 Cheltenham Place,
Brighton, East Sussex,
September 23.

Lib Dems and pensions

From Mr Michael Fogarty

Sir, Baroness Maddock moves this week at Eastbourne a resolution calling on voters to support "excellent Liberal Democrat policies" on pensions, such as — the first item on the list — "retain the basic state pension increased in line with prices".

The purpose of a pension is, of course, to replace earned income. When I was coming up to pension age the state pension replaced about a quarter of an average earner's pay.

Year by year that replacement rate has fallen, and by the time my children, now in their fifties, reach my age it will be all of seven pence in the pound. This policy, of course, is what John Major also promised and what Tony Blair fought Barbara Castle to preserve.

Some liberality, some excellence can't pay, won't pay. In the days when we were the ones who had to pay, we of the much poorer war and postwar generation thought differently.

Yours sincerely,
MICHAEL FOGARTY
(Member, Liberal (Democrat) panel on tax and social security, 1974-91),
Red Copse,
Fozzombe Road,
Boars Hill, Oxford.
100662.2111@compuserve.com
September 22.

How last week's BBC row was saved from farce

Sir Christopher opens his scoring account

TO THE casual eye, last week's "rebellion" by BBC journalists may seem like a trivial manifestation which received too much attention by a media-obsessed media. After all, it is a truism that journalists who are specialists in the chronicling of change usually become resistant when confronted with it themselves. Certainly, the former BBC journalist Polly Toynbee, speaking at the Royal Television Society's Cambridge convention at the weekend, seemed unimpressed by the spat, even though the issue greatly enlivened the proceedings.

The reality is that what happens to the BBC news and current affairs machine, by far the largest pool of television news journalism in the UK and one of the largest in the world, is of importance to those who fund it — the licence payers and viewers.

If the news is going to become more homogenised, if the voice of editors is going to be muted and programmes become less individualistic as a result, then there is a considerable public interest.

Until the row broke out and received media attention, there was going to be a super commissioning editor with money extracted from all the programme budgets and responsible for commissioning features across all BBC radio and television. The aim was the apparently reasonable one of trying to avoid duplication and waste. The reality would almost certainly have been a massive degree of centralisation, uniformity of programming and the birth of a new bureaucracy. Four executive editors, aided by associate editors, would have had enormous centralising power. The autonomy of editors, who were given, in effect, ten days to apply for downgraded versions of their old jobs, would have been undermined.

For a while the row was going forward in a familiar BBC way. There had been "misunderstandings", obviously simultaneously arrived at by the 700 or so journalists involved. Then we were into an *Alice in Wonderland* world of defining words how you want to. Tony Hall, the chief executive of BBC News, announced gravely that if people didn't like being called associate editors, why, they could be called editors again — as if somehow that solved anything.

Two developments rescued the situation from farce. One was the intervention of Sir Christopher Bland, the Chairman of the BBC governors who, like the other governors — whose job it is to represent the public — found out about the details of the plan from the newspapers. The underlying philosophy — preventing individual pro-

grammes from competing against each other for the same interviewees and items — was understood and is eminently sensible.

Sir Christopher's decision to halt the proceedings for further consultation and consideration at a governors' meeting in October was right. Sir Christopher, noted for his independence of mind and impatience with the folly of others, was an excellent choice as BBC Chairman. Until now, however, he has been a bit like a top-class, highly priced soccer striker who on transfer has unaccountably failed to score any goals for his new club. A cracking performance after the drought is all the more welcome.

The second important development came when a group of senior editors of flagship BBC programmes took upon themselves the responsibility of working out a compromise to get the BBC management off the hook on which they had impaled themselves. Although there is still a lot of huffing and puffing and protocol to be endured, plus worrying away at the meaning of words, the compromise option is now clear. It would be the downgrading of the feature commissioner to a co-ordinating role, and editors would remain editors — and not merely in name — but in the control of budgets and staff. Executive editors would have a useful role to play alongside editors, but not ostentatiously atop them. In order to avoid waste and unnecessary duplication, it has the makings of a sensible deal and should be embraced by the BBC governors next month.



RAYMOND SNODDY

SUCH agreement should, however, be the beginning of a new relationship between the BBC and its staff. There will be the inevitable temptation to put the events of last week down to a lack of adequate communication, just as the Conservative Party forever blamed poor communication rather than the inadequacy of the message for sleepwalking into electoral disaster.

It really is time that the BBC realises that its staff is its greatest asset — probably its only asset — apart from an institutional history and expectation in the public mind, and access to scarce airwaves.

The BBC has become notorious for never saying sorry, regarding its staff as something akin to an enemy to be subdued, and trying to shoehorn them into a narrow definition of the digital future.

Sir Christopher could score a second goal by realising that there are many more urgent issues to be dealt with at the BBC on how staff are treated than whether associate editors are called editors or not.

Under the influence

The reshaped Lynne Franks PR has a new blueprint, reports Belinda Archer

Should you find yourself buying the Spice Girls' next single, your decision to purchase will have been affected by an array of influences beyond the simple fact that you like its catchy tune.

Your choice may have been shaped by the recommendations of friends and family, the opinion of a television presenter, a club DJ or even a teacher (if school still applies). Alternatively, you could have heard that a psychologist claims Spice Girl music makes you happy, or that a boffin from the Royal College of Music believes the band produces high-quality songs.

The increasingly complex forces at work behind what makes a consumer buy a product or service is the central plank to the new-look Lynne Franks PR, the quintessentially 1980s public relations firm which was relaunched and rebranded as Life PR on Monday.

The agency, which is now marketing itself on a more robust, businesslike platform than the "Ab Fab" glitz of before, believes that old-style "opinion formers", such as prominent journalists or experts in the given field, have been superseded by a far more wide-ranging, less predictable and less easily identifiable brigade of individuals or organisations, dubbed the "Influencers".

These vary from client to client, and need to be clearly identified for any company to craft an effective communications programme, the agency claims. In short, influencing the influencers is the new blueprint for effective PR and marketing.

Samantha Royston, the chief executive of the reshaped agency, explains: "There has been a massive shift in the past four to five years in the way consumers are influenced. If companies presume they know who those influencers are, and do not identify them correctly, they are in danger of missing one of the most powerful routes to communicating with their target audience."

Ms Royston cites the health sector as a prime example. Here, the traditional opinion formers used to be GPs and pharmacists, but official data now shows that people are visiting their

doctors less frequently, and there is a detectable drive towards self-medication which has resulted directly from other influencing factors. These include healthfood stores, advice columns in newspapers and magazines, "experts" on GMTV, the Internet, sports centres and even personal fitness instructors.

To investigate who and what might be shaping the opinions of a target audience, Life has set up a unit called the "I", short for influence. The unit begins by compiling an exhaustive list of anyone or anything that might have an impact — known as the Influencer Tree. This is developed by means of an initial brainstorming session with the client to identify who the company thinks most influences its audience.

In the case of Lynne Franks PR's longstanding client Vidal Sassoon, for example, three of these primary influencers might be a hairdresser, a fashion designer and a make-up artist. These groups are then quizzed over who influences them. Life then conducts a full vox pop with relevant consumers to ascertain what they think makes them buy a particular brand. Then the agency runs a trawl of the media to see what the relevant journalists are writing about and what they are being influenced by.

The final list of up to 50 influencers are given scores on six criteria: the number of consumers they would be able to reach, their ability to influence other influencers, how much it would cost the company to get them to endorse their product and how accessible they would be, whether they would be open to persuasion to help influence the target market, their fit with the company's brand and their consumer appeal.

These scores are combined and each influencer is given a ranking to form an Influencer Index. The agency finally draws up a marketing strategy based on targeting, say, the top-ten influencers, taking into consideration the client company's marketing budget.

The I has just signed up its first client in the shape of the European Space Agency, a body which tackles govern-



Magazines can have more influence on consumers than specialist opinion

ments that are no longer investing sufficiently in science and space research. Ms Royston says that before Life's involvement, the organisation spent much of its time focusing on supposedly influential science academics connected with the relevant Euro government ministers. However, a full influencer audit by Life could reveal that the ESA has been missing a trick.

It's possible that Steven Spielberg will rank higher on the list of top-ten influencers than, say, the Professor of Physics at Imperial College, London," she says. The ESA could then invite Spielberg to sponsor one of its rockets or use one in his movies.

But is this process really new? Cynics might suggest that pinpointing target markets and assessing who they are influenced by is basic marketing practice. Bridget Brown, a tutor in PR at the leading Bournemouth & Poole College, voices typical suspicions when

she says: "PR involves assessing who your different publics are. It is fundamental to talk about identifying your audience and then working out who influences them."

But Ms Royston ferociously denies that Life's new methodology amounts to little more than window-dressing or the elaborate repackaging of a fundamental marketing process by an agency that, after all, made its name in showbiz and fashion PR. "Most companies understand who their audience is, but little time is spent on the audiences who influence their audience. We are taking a crucial step back," she retorts.

Tilly Sampson, the Life director who runs the I, makes another key point. "This process acts as a safety net and provides objective confirmation on whether it is worth spending time and money pursuing a certain route. Given that a lot of marketing is not science, it's nice to have a tried and tested formula to rely on for once."

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NEWS

Murder charge nurse to be flogged

A British nurse was sentenced to 500 lashes and eight years in jail by a Saudi court for being an accessory to the murder of a colleague. This raised the prospect that her friend had been convicted of murder, which carries a mandatory death penalty. The sentence on Lucille McLaughlin was immediately condemned by her family, the Government and human rights groups. Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said that he was deeply disturbed at the sentence, which was "wholly unacceptable in a modern world". Pages 1, 2, 3

Trimble refuses Adam's hand

Ulster Unionist Party leaders made history by sitting at the same conference table as Sinn Féin for the first time but they emphatically rejected what Gerry Adams called his "hand of friendship". Page 1

Tory women lists

Local Tory parties could be forced for the first time to put women on their shortlists when choosing parliamentary candidates under radical plans being considered by William Hague. There will not be all-women lists. Page 1

Stowaway's escape

A stowaway who leapt overboard after being caught on a banana boat from the Bahamas was found hiding on a tiny island in the Bristol Channel. Page 5

Genetic testing

Companies which offer genetic tests directly to the public could be blacklisted if they fail to follow proper procedures. Page 6

Dyslexia damages

An young woman who left school with a reading age of seven won damages of more than £45,000 from the local authority that failed to diagnose that she had dyslexia. Page 7

Pay to read

Libraries must consider charges to pay for the services that will meet the needs of the next century. The number of books borrowed has fallen by 19 per cent in the past ten years. Page 8

Cabinet pay row

The Cabinet pay dispute burst into the open as two senior ministers publicly countered suggestions that they had agreed to give up a £16,500 increase. Page 9

The fastest man on earth

Squadron Leader Andy Green, who has flown Phantoms for the last six years, was preparing in Nevada for an assault on the world land speed record in *Thrust*, an 850 mph car powered by Rolls-Royce Spey jet engines. But after a run of 690 mph the car developed computer problems and the attempt on the official record was once again postponed. Page 13

Ashdown's risk

Paddy Ashdown will today urge his party not to tie his hands over further links with Labour as he warns that the Liberal Democrats will have to take risks. Page 10

Wings of peace

A falcon is doing more to bring Israelis and Palestinians together than any diplomatic negotiators. Environmentalists from both sides have set up a joint body to protect wildlife. Page 11

Beef ban setback

The drive to persuade Europe to lift its beef ban suffered a setback when the European Commission reported the illegal presence of British beef in Germany. Page 12

Cook angers US

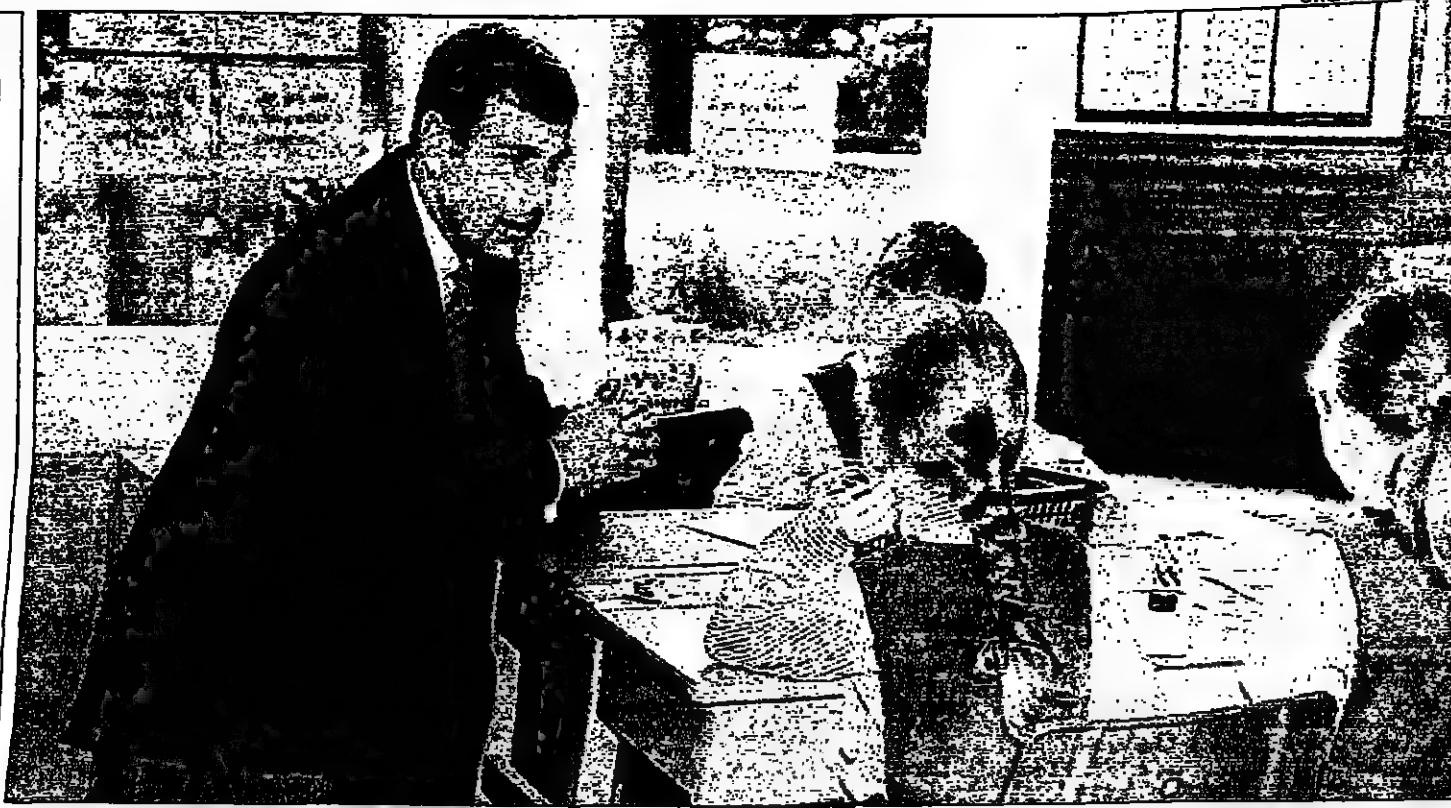
Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, got into an ugly spat with a right-wing American senator after insisting that Washington should pay its UN debt. Page 14

Revenge on Clinton

President Clinton suffered the first instalment in the revenge of Harold Ickes, the sacked senior aide whose copious notes may hold the key to irregular White House fundraising. Page 15

Jungle firefighters

The haze overhanging much of South-East Asia reached new danger levels as 2,000 Malaysian firemen prepared to leave for Indonesia to help tackle the jungle fires. Page 15



The Duke of York talking to children at the Westfield Independent School during a visit to Newcastle upon Tyne yesterday

BUSINESS

London Underground: Ministers have been told to act immediately on a report by Price Waterhouse that will call for the London Underground to be broken into three or four sections. Page 27

Telecom: Don Cruickshank, the regulator that British Telecom loves to hate, said he would not seek a second term. Page 27

Virgin: Richard Branson, who has always missed out on the battle to win a major television licence, has decided to try to establish a significant presence in international programme production. Page 27

Markets: The FT-SE 100 fell 48.2 to 5027.5. Sterling rose from 100.8 to 101.4 after a rise from \$1.6031 to \$1.6127 and from DM2.8750 to DM2.8940. Page 30

SPORT

Golf: Miguel Angel Martin has ended his dispute with Europe's Ryder Cup committee over his exclusion from the team to meet the United States. Page 52

Rugby union: Pontypridd will host the Heineken Cup game against Brive at Sardis Road on Saturday knowing that their every action will be under the microscope after the brawl two weeks ago. Page 52

Tennis: Greg Rusedski, the Great Britain No.1, beat Todd Woodbridge of Australia, in the first round of the Compaq Grand Slam Cup in Munich. Page 46

Football: Five years ago, Shay Given could be found in Co Donegal, helping out in the family market gardening business. Now he is in goal for Newcastle. Page 49

ARTS

Father figure: The Canadian film director Atom Egoyan says he had known he was going to have a child, he might never have embarked upon his new film, *The Sweet Hereafter*. Page 18

Electric Zoo: Benedict Nightingale is riveted by Zoe Wamaker's hauntingly contemporary performance in *Electra*. Page 18

Rising star: By day 23-year-old Kara Miller works in advertising; but in her own time she writes plays, stages them through her own company, and sometimes acts as well. Page 18

Sure shot: Don McCullin has taken intrusive photographs in the world's war zones — but a new exhibition confirms that his can be justified. Page 19

FEATURES

Split decision: The audience, faced with an invitation to be sexy, split into those who bolted and those who tried their best. John Lloyd at a holistic festival. Page 17

Nigella Lawson: On shameless self-publicity, Labour's pay poser, the age of enjoyment and the BBC's blunder. Page 17

Embroidery theme: Try delicate decoration for a look that is sweet and sharp. Page 16

No Franks: Is it really the end of the Ab Fab era for Lynne Franks PR? asks Belinda Archer. Page 24

Code of honour: How newspaper editors have agreed a new code of practice. Page 25

Swinging place: The Ryder Cup moves buyers to Spain. Page 43

The Nobel Peace Prize has always been controversial. In 1979 it was awarded to Mother Teresa; now the Labour Government has nominated Diana, Princess of Wales. But with all due respect to the late princess, her candidature is a step too far. She ran no real risks and made no real sacrifices: she cannot be compared to Arafat, Mandela or Kissinger, let alone Mother Teresa. It would be better not to award the prize at all — *La Repubblica*, Rome

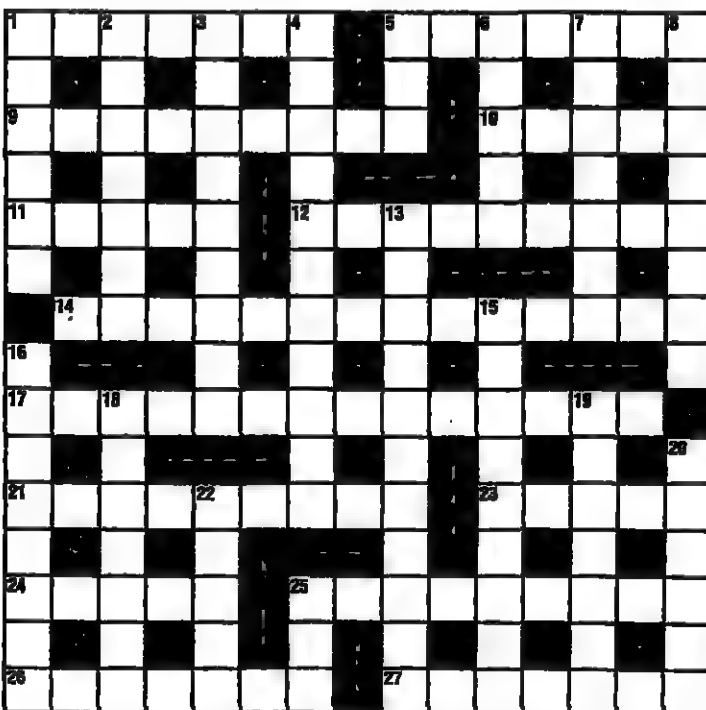
TOMORROW

IN THE TIMES

FILMS
Geoff Brown checks out the special effects of Robert Zemeckis's sci-fi spectacular, *Contact*

BOOKS
Michael Portillo on the Tory party, Malcolm Bradbury on Kurt Vonnegut's last work

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,593



This puzzle was solved within 30 minutes by 37% of the competitors in the 1997 Times Crossword Championship.

- ACROSS**
- Greek character holds a lively dance (7).
 - What constituencies have to charge? (7).
 - Averages close to number initially produced? Not at all! (2,2,5).
 - Street song that can lift one a little (5).
 - Man installed after a vote, in principle (5).
 - One's times converted into capital in US (3,6).
 - Alloy in yacht used by Bond's superiors (9,5).
 - Where a key is being auctioned (5,3,6).
 - Publication of novel, perhaps, not hard to arrange (9).
 - See you are, so to speak, pinching North's contract (5).
 - Improvise telephone with no end of invention (3,2).
- DOWN**
- It's used in Tripoli by a native (6).
 - Like a less attractive dog, one denying access to others? (7).
 - Parent entering reform school (4,5).
 - Go after the rats? A bar member's put fellows inside (7,4).
 - Characters following every part of her conditions (3).
 - Italian fare supplement produces irritation, nothing more (5).
 - Not for profit, in a way (7).
 - Measure introduced by firm to last in business? (4,4).
 - Struck before, splitting layers into fragments (11).
 - Infantry officer, for example, encountered carrying second flag (9).
 - Gentleman on horse who's rewarded with silver? (6-2).
 - Old woman's encouragement to take a chance (7).
 - Free-lance vet wasting little time in isolated country area (7).
 - Playwright boosted by uplifting atmosphere in house (6).
 - Like a future monarch, perhaps — one instructed soundly (5).
 - Fourth of March issue — vast number run off (3).

Solution to Puzzle No 20,592

COVERUP CLASSIFIED
O T O R H O N E
L O B E S T O N E N E W
L E T A U E A
A L L A N E X P E R I E N T
R I C G O
C A P I T A L I S T
V I E W P O I N T S H A K E
E L E N H I O U T
R O U T E E D I N B U R G H
S P I T R I N I O G
E N T R E A T Q U E S T I O N

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INFORMATION

Latest Royal Mail delivery times
UK Weather: All regions 0330 444 999
UK Radio: All regions 0330 401 410
Inside PG2
PG2 and Last Round 0330 401 946
National News 0330 401 947
National News 0330 401 948
Channel crossing 0330 401 949
Planning to Headline 0330 401 950
A Guide 0330 401 951

Weather by Fax
Fax 0330 401 952
Fax 0330 401 953
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World City Weather

153 destinations world wide
by phone dial 0330 410 310
by fax 0330 410 311
by telex 0330 410 312
by email 0330 410 313
by internet 0330 410 314
by mobile 0330 410 315
by pager 0330 410 316
by satellite 0330 410 317
by radio 0330 410 318
by television 0330 410 319
by video 0330 410 320
by web 0330 410 321
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by wireless 0330 410 330

Car reports by fax

now and used car reports from
the AA news of 195 cars. 0330 410 330
you have to see to see receive more

Hours of Darkness

Sun time: 5:50 am Sun set: 6:54 pm
Moon sets: 11:50 pm Moon rises: 11:50 pm
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TODAY



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led to a job
in television
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the men of Europe
bond at Valderrama
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AND
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50, 51

BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 24 1997

Blair to back break-up of Tube before sell-off



Robinson: to receive report

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY
TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

TONY BLAIR is to back a controversial recommendation to privatise the London Underground by splitting it into as many as four parts and selling up to 51 per cent of the businesses.

The move, a U-turn from Labour's pre-election stance, is to follow a report to be submitted next week by Price Waterhouse, the accountants, to John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster General. Mr Blair is understood to be strongly backing moves to draw up

a series of measures that can be introduced in advance of the legislation required to sell off the tube for up to £1.2 billion.

The legislation to push through a sell-off would not be passed until at least 1999, making the sale unlikely to be completed before the next general election. Ministers concede that the system cannot be allowed to crumble over the next three years and say that investment is a priority.

The Price Waterhouse report, which ministers ordered to be completed urgently in July, is understood to favour giving separate companies ownership both of infrastructure and operation on several lines, although the network would remain under the

London Underground corporate identity.

Mr Prescott has been told that the Treasury is prepared to look "sympathetically" at plans to make a single payment to the Tube system next year to kick-start a huge investment programme. The one-off subsidy to help London Underground as it faces escalating costs for the Jubilee Line extension, could be offset partly by new charges on parking and motoring in London.

Mr Prescott is keen to move quickly after clear indications from business that it would back strongly any proposals to sell a majority stake in the business, which has an

investment backlog of some £1.5 billion. Railtrack, Virgin Trains, Stagecoach and National Express are among the groups interested in buying a stake in the network.

Mr Prescott will receive a report from London's business community next week outlining support for proposals to sell part of the system. The report from London First will make clear that business supports either a system of vertical integration, with private business having a majority stake in up to four sections, or to have separate, long-term franchises of up to 30 years, for operation and infrastructure. The report will emphasise that the

huge sums required to wipe out the investment backlog, of some £750 million a year for five years, is double what is currently affordable.

Both the London First and Price Waterhouse reports are understood to dismiss the current Private Finance Initiative as too cumbersome to attract business interest in such a large sell-off.

Senior government figures conceded yesterday that only a substantial upfront subsidy would make the eventual sell-off palatable to the business community and to the traditional wing of the Labour Party, which has voiced opposition to privatisation of the Underground.

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES		
FTSE 100	5,822.9	(-48.2)
Yield	3.27%	
FTSE All share	2,384.85	(-18.85)
Nikkei	Closed	
Dow Jones	7,969.57	(-27.26)
S&P Composite	952.53	(-2.80)
US RATE		
Federal Funds	5.75%	(0.00%)
Long Bond	100.47%	(100.00%)
Yield	6.27%	(6.35%)
LONDON MONEY		
3-month Treasury bill	7.00%	(7.00%)
Libor 3-month	11.75%	(11.75%)
STERLING		
New York	1.8120*	(1.8040)
London	1.8123	(1.8038)
DM	2.3846	(2.3740)
FF	9.7281	(9.6575)
SFR	2.3761	(2.3572)
Yen	195.38	(193.78)
£ Index	100.4	(100.8)
US \$ DOLLAR		
London	1.7970*	(1.7905)
DM	6.8332*	(6.8140)
SFR	1.4738*	(1.4685)
Yen	121.51*	(121.78)
£ Index	108.0	(108.2)
Tokyo close Yen	182.71	
COMMODITY PRICES		
Brent 15-day (Dec)	616.86	(616.86)
WTI	58.11	
London close	5381.85	(5381.05)

* denotes midday trading price

Telecoms regulator decides to quit

By ERIC REGULY

DON CRUICKSHANK, the regulator that British Telecom loves to hate, yesterday said he would not seek a second term as Director-General of Telecommunications, and urged the Government to replace him with a commission instead of another individual regulator.

Mr Cruickshank, 55, said he was under no pressure from the Government to step down. "I decided last Christmas that I would not seek a second term. Five years as a full-time regulator is enough."

He said he has no full-time job prospects, but it emerged last night that he has been offered a consultancy role on the Government's education and public access taskforce, which examines ways to connect schools to the information superhighway.

Mr Cruickshank, whose salary is £126,400, is considered the toughest of its utility regulators. He thinks utility regulators should be replaced by a commission, under the theory that several points of view are better than one. This, he believes, would speed up the decision-making process and make regulation more transparent and more accountable to the public.

Commentary, page 29

Brown says his tough line will hold down inflation

By ALASDAIR MURRAY, ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

GORDON BROWN insisted yesterday that he was "optimistic" about the outlook for the economy despite the "threat" posed to inflation by strong consumer spending.

The Chancellor told delegates at the International Monetary Fund meeting in Hong Kong that although the Government had inherited an economy in danger of overheating "we are now on course to get the economy back on track next year".

Mr Brown's comments came as revised GDP figures showed the economy was growing at its fastest rate since 1989, heightening speculation that the Bank of England will raise interest rates again in November. Second-quarter GDP increased by an annual rate of 3.5 per cent, compared with a previously published estimate of 3.4 per cent.

Separate balance of payments data showed Britain's current account in surplus for the third consecutive quarter — the best performance since 1985.

Mr Brown signalled in his IMF speech that he will continue to maintain a tough line on inflation by holding down public spending and pursuing a "vigilant" monetary policy. He expressed some concern about the impact of the strong pound on industry but insisted that business would benefit more from an end to the "stop-go instability of the past".

"I want the British economy to enjoy the far greater underlying strength that comes from a base of high levels of growth and employment alongside low and stable inflation," he said.

The Chancellor also emphasised that the Government would continue to help British businesses to prepare for the single currency, but gave no indication

as to whether the Government intends to join EMU in the first round.

But Eddie George, who was also speaking in Hong Kong yesterday, again urged Europe to adopt a cautious approach in the run-up to monetary union. The Governor of the Bank of England said that he could not "understand the hurry" towards a single currency as there were real economic risks to the project.

Mr George added, however, that it was important to plan assuming that EMU would proceed on time, and Britain would need to pursue parallel monetary and fiscal policies even if it did not join the single currency.

In London, the stronger than expected GDP data caused some jitters on the stock market. The FTSE 100 fell 48.2 points to 5,822.9. The pound climbed two pence to DM2.8946, its highest level for three weeks. Sterling's trade-weighted index also rose 0.6 to 101.4. Economists said the Bank would be concerned by the revised GDP figures, which showed real disposable income surging by 3 per cent in the quarter — the biggest jump since 1979.

But the savings ratio unexpectedly rose from 10.4 to 11.7 per cent, its highest level since early last year. The second-quarter current account surplus totalled £88 million despite the strong pound. Andrew Cates, UK economist at UBS, said: "Just as the high savings ratio indicates that conditions in the economy are different to those that characterised the boom of the late 1980s, the lack of any deterioration in the current account balance also indicates that overheating fears have been overcooked."

Commentary, page 29



Gordon Brown, pictured yesterday in Hong Kong, told the IMF that he would pursue a vigilant monetary policy

Car registration in August to end

By KEVIN EASON, MOTORING EDITOR

THE August registration plate change which causes chaos in Britain's motor industry is to be abolished. Gavin Strang, the Transport Minister, has confirmed that the one-month boom in which the motor industry makes a quarter of its annual sales will be replaced by a new system in which number plates will change twice yearly.

The decision was greeted with relief last night by motor industry executives who have been pressing for years for an end to the 30-year-old system.

Chris McGowan, chief executive of the Retail Motor Industry Federation, said: "This is most

welcome news. The industry could not go on with a ludicrous situation in which 25 per cent of sales were crammed into four weeks. It was no good to the industry and no good for the consumer."

Whether the industry has seen its last August sale remains to be seen though Dr Strang is ready to consult the industry on the timing of the introduction for a new system. In letters to industry leaders, he promised that a firm decision would be made before the end of the year.

Sales of new cars hit a record 525,539 last month, worth an estimated £5 billion.

Greener says GrandMet merger still on schedule

By DOMINIC WALSH

GUINNESS, the brewing and drinks company, was upbeat over the prospects for its proposed £24 billion merger with Grand Metropolitan yesterday as it reported first-half profits ahead of market expectations.

Tony Greener, chairman, said pre-tax profits, which were 4 per cent higher at £372 million on turnover slightly down at £2.03 billion, would have come in 12 per cent higher at a constant exchange rate and discounting the effect of two share buybacks.

Pointing to "solid gains" at both Guinness Brewing and United Distillers, he said:

"This momentum provides a powerful springboard for the proposed merger with GrandMet, which continues on schedule for completion just after the turn of the year."

Mr Greener refused to comment on the state of relations with its biggest shareholder, LVMH, which continues to oppose the merger, but was adamant regulatory hurdles on both sides of the Atlantic could be overcome. "We are totally confident we will receive a decision that is totally satisfactory, both to us and the regulators," he said.

The strength of sterling knocked £12 million off inter-

im profits and Mr Greener estimated the full-year effect at around £60 million. Some £6 million was wiped from its share of the profits of Moët Hennessy, the LVMH subsidiary in which it has a 34 per cent stake. Yesterday LVMH reported an 18 per cent rise in interim profits to Fr1.92 billion (£197 million).

Mr Greener said the effects of recent currency turmoil would be broadly offset.

Earnings per share were up 9 per cent at 134p, and the interim dividend, to be paid on October 28 as a foreign income dividend, rises 8 per cent to 4.92p.

Wall Street poker king returns \$3bn

FROM OLIVER AUGUST IN NEW YORK

JOHN MERIWETHER, the Wall Street trader who once offered to bet \$10 million (£6.25 million) on a game of Liar's Poker, is returning half the money in his \$6 billion hedge fund, Long Term Capital Management, to investors.

The move follows a collapse in the returns from 60 per cent two years ago to 15. All capital invested after December 31 1994, ten months after the fund was launched, and all profits will be returned.

The former head bond trader at Salomon Brothers became a legend in 1986 when John Gutfreund, Salomon's chairman, walked up to him

on the trading floor and asked him to play a single game of Liar's Poker, a bluffing game based on the serial numbers on dollar bills, for \$1 million.

Mr Meriwether replied that he would play for \$10 million or not at all. Mr Gutfreund smiled, shook his head and returned to his office.

But yesterday, in a jittery letter, Mr Meriwether told investors: "The fund has excess capital... primarily because of a substantial increase in the capital base from the larger-than-expected, past-realised rates of return, and high reinvestment rates elected by the fund's investors."

Virgin in joint TV venture with CBS

By RICHARD SNODDY
MEDIA EDITOR

RICHARD BRANSON, the Virgin boss who has always missed out in the battle for a major television licence in the UK, is to attempt to establish a significant presence in international programme production.

Virgin, which has set up a new international production and distribution arm, Virgin Century Television, yesterday announced a joint venture with CBS Broadcast International.

Under the deal both companies will have first look at each other's ideas and programme formats and events. Virgin is attractive to a US network such as CBS because of its youthful image and feel for younger markets. The UK company already has a 50 per cent interest in an independent production company called Rapido.

Mr Branson said yesterday: "This venture represents our initial entry into international television."

Jeremy Fox, who led Virgin's ultimately unsuccessful bid for the Channel 5 licence in the UK, will run Virgin Century Television and manage the new partnership with Rainer Siek, president of CBS Broadcast International.

Mr Fox said yesterday he was already talking to banks to raise a significant fund for investing in production and rights for programme distribution around the world.

Virgin does not exclude moving on to owning channels of its own in future.

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Labour to list firms 'that need to improve'

By Philip Bassett, Industrial Editor

MARGARET BECKETT, the President of the Board of Trade, is to publish details of companies and industries that ministers think could improve. The move is expected to prompt concerns about the Labour Party returning to old-style interventionist policies of the 1970s.

Mrs Beckett is convinced that specifying which industries and sectors are underperforming is a vital tool for increasing the UK's overall economic and industrial competitiveness. This is despite Labour insisting it will not revert to the old-style Labour industrial policies of "picking

winners", which ministers now dismiss as a policy of supporting losers.

Mrs Beckett told a Confederation of British Industry conference last night that the Government will apply the business technique of benchmarking — measuring a company's performance against the best — to British business as a whole in a new document to be published shortly, *Benchmarking British Business*.

The DTI said that this "will identify business areas in need of improvement", while Mrs Beckett told the CBI: "It is only by assessing themselves against the best, both at home and abroad, that companies will really improve."

She told the CBI that British companies at their best were "world beaters", and singled out three she regarded in that category — BOC, the industrial gas company, Rolls-Royce, the aero-engine manufacturer partially based in her Derby constituency, and JCB, the construction equipment maker whose chairman, Sir Anthony Bamford, was identified by Tony Blair as a large donor to the Conservative Party.

Mrs Beckett said companies must manage their employees to get the best from them, to embrace technological improvements and innovation, and to operate partnership at all levels, but said that such individual moves by firms did not mean that companies "will receive no practical help from the Government".

After earlier in the day holding "constructive" talks with Karel van Miert, the European Competition Commissioner, on the planned BA/American Airlines and P&O/Stena alliances, Mrs Beckett described herself to the CBI as "the voice of business in Government". She followed the speech with the first meeting of the Government's business-led advisory group on competitiveness.

End of journey, page 31



Neville Simms said that the shift away from housebuilding was proving successful

Tarmac in warning on quarrying tax plan

By Adam Jones

NEVILLE SIMMS, chief executive of Tarmac, the heavy building materials and construction group, hit out at the possibility of a tax on quarrying yesterday.

Mr Simms said it would raise the cost of construction projects to customers. Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, announced a review of the environmental costs of the extraction of aggregates in his first Budget.

Tarmac reported first-half pre-tax profits of £38.6 million yesterday, compared with a loss of £58.3 million in the same period last year, when it had to absorb a £65 million restructuring charge.

Turnover on continuing operations increased from £1.2 billion to £1.33 billion. Net debt fell from £512 million at June 30, 1996, to £411 million this year. Heavy building materials operating profits rose from £26.4 million to £43.3 million. In construction services they rose from £8.2 million to £11.7 million.

Mr Simms said the results were "real evidence" that the group's shift away from housebuilding offers the potential for significant earnings growth. An unchanged interim dividend of 5p will be paid on December 3.

Tempus, page 30

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Siebe to buy Eaton division for £193m

SIEBE, the acquisitive UK engineering company, has agreed to pay £193 million for the worldwide appliance control operations (ACO) of Eaton Corporation, of America. It was announced yesterday. ACO manufactures electronic and electro-mechanical control products for domestic appliances. Customers include General Electric, Electrolux and Bosch-Siemens. With headquarters in Strassbourg, it has manufacturing operations in America, Mexico, France, Italy, Germany, Monaco, Brazil, Australia and China, and employs about 4,800 people worldwide.

In the 12 months to June 30 ACO earned operating profits of £19.4 million on sales of £272.6 million. Net assets were of £129.3 million. Separately, Siebe announced the proposed divestment of selected non-core businesses, including its Tecalemit garage equipment operations and Wells Electronics, the US manufacturer of semiconductor burn-in and test sockets. Combined sales of the operations to be divested were £115 million in the year to April 5; net assets were £44 million.

Southern publishes dip

PROFIT before tax at Southern Newspapers, publisher of *The Southern Daily Echo*, fell to £14.1 million (£18.8 million) in the year to June 30. Last year's figure included a £7.5 million profit on the sale of the group's Southampton city centre offices. Although Southern received a further £4.2 million from the sale this year, the group took a £3.4 million exceptional charge. A final dividend of 15p a share, due on November 11, makes 20p (17.75p). Adjusted earnings were 48.05p (37.95p).

Sentry Farming falls

SHARES in Sentry Farming fell from 115p to 83½p after the food production group slid deeper into the red for the first half of 1997 and said full-year profits are likely to be substantially lower than last year if lower wheat prices persist. Wheat prices have fallen significantly, due largely to the strength of sterling. Pre-tax losses in the first half grew from £497,000 to £774,000. Losses per share rose from 5.2p to 6.9p. Again there is no half-year dividend.

Talks lift Arcadian

SHARES in Arcadian rose from 50½p to 65½p after the company revealed that it had received an approach which may or may not lead to an offer for the hotels company. Arcadian said that discussions were at a preliminary stage and that a further announcement will be made in due course. Arcadian is worth almost £96 million. It made £3.6 million before tax on sales of £30.5 million in the year to December 31.

SB's Requip approved

SMITHKLINE BEECHAM has received US Food and Drug Administration clearance to begin marketing Requip, a treatment for Parkinson's disease. Tests have shown that it can enable early-stage sufferers to recover some of their motor skills, and can also help late-stage sufferers who are being treated with levodopa, the current standard treatment. Requip, which is forecast to have peak sales of £200 million, can cause side effects including nausea, dizziness, somnolence and headaches.

Shorts to create 300 jobs

SHORTS, the Belfast aerospace company, is making a £108.4 million investment that will create more than 300 jobs and safeguard 670 more over the next five years. Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary said. The company is to design and make vital aircraft components for two new aircraft projects being undertaken by Bombardier, its Canadian parent. Shorts has been given financial assistance of £19.5 million by the Government's Industrial Development Board.

Simon advances 16%

THE restructured Simon Group, formerly Simon Engineering, reported profits of £5.8 million before tax for the first half of 1997, a 16 per cent rise on the same period last year. Turnover fell from £165.8 million to £119 million as the group continued to focus on port and engineering services. Earnings were 2.5p a share (1.5p). No interim dividend will be paid. Simon Group dismissed previous rumours of a possible bid from Rutland Trust. The shares rose 1p to 39p.

Gold Medal to float

GOLD MEDAL TRAVEL is to seek a stock market flotation within two years after acquiring the controlling interest in Travelworld, the travel agent, and full control of Airline Network, the teleshopping centre for discounted scheduled airlines, for an undisclosed sum. Gold Medal, based in Blackpool, specialises in the wholesale of airline seats to independent travel agents. It expects turnover to rise from £245 million to up to £300 million in the next 12 months.

Proudfoot passes payout

PROUDFOOT, the management consultancy, is again passing payment of an interim dividend after returning pre-tax profits little changed at £2.57 million in the six months to June 30, against £2.52 million for the first half of the previous year. Earnings rose to 2p a share from 1.4p. Malcolm Hughes, chief executive, said the company needed to preserve net cash reserves until it was clear that the trend of earnings recovery and cash generation could be sustained.

Britton profits fall

BRITTON GROUP, the packaging company, had a fall in pre-tax profits to £7.9 million from £11.1 million in the half-year to June 30, affected by the pound's strength and a decline in cartons division sales. Turnover was £109.5 million (£110 million). Earnings fell to 4.24p a share (5.76p) but the interim dividend is 1.45p (1.32p). The shares rose 3p to 75½p, against a 15½p 12-month high. Robin Williams, chief executive, said trading conditions remained competitive.

Vanguard gives up work on ulcer drug

By Paul Durman

VANGUARD MEDICA, the drug development company, has abandoned work on a treatment that had little effect on patients treated in phase II trials.

Vanguard and its partner Eli Lilly, the large US drugs company, had hoped to use VML 295 to treat those suffering with ulcerated colons. However, Robert Mansfield, Vanguard's chief executive, said the drug proved no more effective than the placebo.

Mr Mansfield played down the significance of the setback, saying that ulcerative colitis was recognised to be a high risk area. But Vanguard's

shares fell 10p to a low for the year of 367½p, barely half their 705p peak.

Mr Mansfield said Vanguard was making good progress with the four phase III trials of its most important project, the migraine drug that it has licensed to SmithKline Beecham.

The increased spending on the drug pushed Vanguard's research and development costs to £10.2 million (£3.8 million) in the first half. With no revenues, Vanguard suffered a pre-tax loss of £9.9 million (£3.7 million). It ended June with cash of £44.5 million.

US backing helps Biotech's trial

By Paul Durman

THE US National Cancer Institute is backing an independent breast cancer trial of Marinastat, the cancer drug that is British Biotech's most important product.

The study, to be run by cancer specialists of the Eastern Co-operative Oncology Group, is the second "co-operative" study to look at Marinastat. British Biotech sees this as a sign of growing awareness of the drug among cancer specialists.

Most of British Biotech's £1.1 billion stock-market valuation rests on the success of Marinastat. The Oxford company said its own phase III

trials of the drug were on track, with first results expected in the first half of 1999.

The company has begun a sixth study of the drug in ovarian cancer. It has yet to examine the drug in breast cancer.

British Biotech said Zactex, the pancreatitis drug being reviewed by European regulators, was also making satisfactory progress.

It said the increase in its first-quarter losses, from £8 million to £9 million, was as planned. At the end of July, British Biotech still had cash of £173.1 million, following last year's substantial rights issue.

IMF turns down crisis fund plan

By Janet Bush

ECONOMICS EDITOR

ASIAN plans for a new \$100 billion (£62 billion) crisis fund to bail out troubled economies in the region were given a firm thumbs down by the International Monetary Fund yesterday.

Speaking at the IMF's annual meeting in Hong Kong, Stanley Fischer, first deputy managing director, objected to a fund that would lend money without linking the loans to strict conditions of economic performance.

Mr Fischer said: "Access to loans with no conditionality would be a mistake, simply a mistake."

The idea for a crisis fund was discussed at the first meeting of a new grouping of European and Asian finance ministers which took place before the gathering in Hong Kong. The plan, which was floated in response to the collapse of markets in Thailand and the rest of East Asia, has met with more or less unanimous industrialised countries and now from the IMF.

The Fund has already put in place a \$17 billion rescue package for Thailand with extremely tough conditions for economic reform.

Access to Justice wound up

By Gavin Lumsden

ACCESS TO JUSTICE, a company that provides legal advice to people who could not obtain legal aid, has been wound up by the Department of Trade and Industry, after an investigation revealed serious flaws in the firm's accounts.

In an exceptionally swift action the High Court granted the winding up order on the same day that the DTI presented its petition.

Shirley Jackson, of Begbie Norton, which has been appointed liquidator by the Official Receiver, said that the company was insolvent and had been trading inappropriately.

Established in 1985, Access to Justice derived most of its income from letting space at its offices in Holborn, Central London. A meeting is to be held with a company director this morning, she said.

The petition was presented after an investigation had been carried out under Section 447 of the Companies Act 1985.

All public inquiries concerning the company should be made to the Official Receiver, 21 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3SS.

Hely Hutchinson lobbies over textbooks

Hodder to target schools

By Raymond Snoddy, Media Editor

TIM HELY HUTCHINSON, chief executive of Hodder Headline, the book publisher, hopes to persuade the Government that parents should pay for children's schoolbooks.

Mr Hely Hutchinson, with other publishers, has argued that the present £50 to £75 per pupil spent on books each year is completely inadequate. Instead, they are lobbying for the Government to introduce a new scheme that would require parents to cover the cost of books while offering protection for families with low incomes. "It is certainly in the

Government's thinking already," Mr Hely Hutchinson claimed yesterday.

Hodder, which was at the forefront of the campaign that led to the ending of the Net Book Agreement, was reporting a rise in pre-tax profits to £1.3 million from £500,000 for the six months to June 30. Sales fell to £38 million from £40.3 million as the company discontinued its low-margin agency and door-to-door business overseas.

Earnings per share almost doubled to 2.5p and the interim dividend has been raised

by 10 per cent to 2.2p. Net borrowings were reduced by 21 per cent to £7.3 million and gearing has been reduced to 22 per cent.

Current Hodder titles include biographies of Peter Cook and Dickie Bird and novels by Elizabeth George, who is moving to Hodder from Transworld, Stephen King and Charles Frazier.

Mr Hely Hutchinson said the second half had started well with like-for-like publishing sales ahead in the first eight months. Hodder shares rose 16p to 190p yesterday.

TOURIST RATES

	Bank Boys	Bank Sells
Australia \$	2.24	2.17
Austria Sch	21.27	16.71
Belgium Fr	65.85	57.99
Canada \$	2.58	2.17
Cyprus Cyp£	0.867	0.825
Denmark Kr	11.61	10.72
Finland Mk	8.16	8.45
France Fr	10.1	8.41
Germany DM	3.05	2.18
Greece Dr	483	444
Hong Kong \$	13.32	12.12
Ireland P	1.28	1.08
Ireland Pt	1.15	1.08
Israel Sh	5.97	5.32
Italy Lira	3000	2765
Japan Yen	210.39	182.45
Malta	0.571	0.512
Netherlands Gld	3.452	3.157
New Zealand \$	5.69	5.45
Norway Kr	12.32	11.48
Portugal Esc	308.53	284.52
S Africa R	8.29	7.74
Spain Pta	256.78	227.05
Sweden Kr	13.13	12.03
Switzerland Fr	2.63	2.31
Turkey Lira	208000	288731
USA \$	1.718	1.576

Rates for small denomination bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Differentials rates apply to travellers' cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

PLAY PORTFOLIO £200,000 TO BE WON

£2,000 TO BE WON TODAY — TURN TO THE EQUITY PRICES, PAGE 32

Start playing new Portfolio, an exciting opportunity to play the stock market without getting your fingers burnt. You can win £2,000 a day six days a week in *The Times*, and you can play every Sunday in *The Sunday Times* to win £5,000. Better still, there is a £10,000 weekly prize, if you play Portfolio in both papers, seven days a week. A second gamecard was inserted in Monday's *Times*. Playing Portfolio is easy and fun. Every week companies' share prices go up and down in the real world of the Stock Exchange. So you can experience the excitement of the stock market swings, but without the risks.

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● On each individual Portfolio gamecard there are eight numbers printed in a grid. (See example, above)

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● The 44 companies are taken from the hundreds whose shares are listed on *The Times* Equity Prices page every day.

● Simply check the share price movement (+ or -) of your eight Portfolio shares.

● When you have checked all eight share movements and entered them on to the Portfolio panel on page 32 add them up to obtain your plus or minus total.

THE TIMES THE SUNDAY TIMES

Portfolio

17258088	10	14	15	29	73734091
	35	37	38	39	

- When adding up your total, ignore fractions, ie enter 16½ as 16 (the symbol ... equals no change).
- If your overall total exactly matches the points required in the Daily Portfolio Dividend, printed on the Portfolio panel on page 32, you win or share the £2,000 daily prize.

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The weekly accumulator game started in *The Times* on Monday. To play the weekly accumulator game simply add up your daily Portfolio totals, Monday to Sunday. If your accumulator total matches exactly the weekly portfolio accumulator dividend, published in the *The Sunday Times*, you win or share the weekly accumulator prize of £10,000.

HOW TO CLAIM YOUR PRIZE

Claims for *The Times* daily Portfolio dividend must be made to the Portfolio claims line on 0171-481 3388 between 9.30am and 3pm today. No claims can be accepted outside these hours and you must claim your prize the day you win. You must have your card with you when you claim. Other persons can claim on your behalf provided they have your card. No responsibility can be accepted for failure to contact the claims office for any reason within the stated hours. In the event of more than one valid claim for any prize, that prize will be divided equally among the winners.

*You can get a Portfolio card by calling the card request line on 0171-481 3355 during normal office hours. Cards are also available at selected newsagents.

THE TIMES

Team needed to end NewRo-sis



COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

Don Cruickshank has spared us the double speak of politicians. He is bowing out of Ofsted not to spend more time with his family but to spend more time in the private sector, where his talents will undoubtedly command a higher price than even the souped-up regulatory authority for which he is calling could possibly afford.

His business background, coupled with his inside knowledge of Ofsted's thinking and practices, will make Mr Cruickshank a very valuable commodity, although his regular bad-tempered spats with BT perhaps limit his options for future employment. There again, BT directors may feel that it is worth doubling his current £124,600 salary just to have him safely on their side.

But Mr Cruickshank's decision to forgo a second term of office as Director-General of Telecommunications does focus attention on the difficulties of recruiting, and keeping, high-calibre regulators. It is an issue causing some concern to Howard Davies, the man charged with creating NewRo, the City's new super-regulator.

Mr Davies has now settled on a home for his all-encompassing organisation, but he has yet to name the top team that will be moving into Canary Wharf with him. So far, suggestions as to who may be his chief executive have been remarkably unimaginative, concentrating on individuals already ensconced in the regulatory

field. Yet if NewRo is to be an effective new force instead of an unwieldy bureaucracy, it will need to attract a raft of high-calibre, and potentially very expensive, individuals.

The question now being debated around the foundations of NewRo is whether it should be aiming for a structure based around career regulators, or whether there are advantages in building an organisation which is merely a stepping stone in a financial career. The latter is already the *de facto* norm in many of the financial regulatory authorities, where staff turnover has reached levels that threaten organisational chaos. At the PIA, the departure rate is about 20 per cent a year but at Imro, it has apparently reached twice that level.

The uncertainty generated by the impending amalgamation of the authorities under NewRo's umbrella is obviously one cause of concern, but money is another. The private sector is currently finding no difficulty in fishing out regulators with the bait of hefty increases in their earnings.

Imagine how the problem could be compounded once the organisations all gather down in Docklands and staff from one regulator learn just how much more those

from another regulator — probably the Bank of England — pocket.

Mr Davies has taken on a formidable task. Devising the structure and systems of a super-SIB would be sufficient challenge, but building it while simultaneously keeping the existing structures functioning offers horrendous scope for disaster. If those disasters are to be avoided, Mr Davies will need the services of a first-rate organisation man at his side.

Give prudence a chance

There was a single, stunning figure in the voluminous national accounts for the second quarter. The savings ratio, the most eagerly watched indicator of consumer confidence — or lack of it — jumped to 11.7 per cent, roughly on a par with the level last seen in spring 1996. So much for a ram-

panant consumer boom. To put this figure into perspective, the savings ratio fell to 4 per cent in 1988 when the economy hit boiling point. It is truly remarkable that the ratio now remains at nearly three times this level after five years of an economic recovery that has latterly seen tax cuts and, of course, an unprecedented one-off addition to the nation's wealth in the form of building society windfalls. There seems to be a distinct lack of consumer animal spirits considering such a promising economic backdrop.

The statisticians, of course, would like to confuse the issue a little, and point out that the big jump in the savings ratio largely reflects hefty increases in dividends that have boosted pension funds, which count as personal savings. So, there has been a significant rise in unspent income rather than an increase in active savings. If the rise in the savings ratio had reflected that consumers were choosing to save

large rises in wages, it would have told an even more dramatic story about consumer caution in this age of insecurity.

But the figure is still dramatic and could have looked even better. For windfalls that have been saved do not figure in the national accounts as they have been redistributed. But any windfall shares which were cashed in and then used to buy cars or holidays do show up as consumer spending. This mismatch of accounting conventions should, as the Office for National Statistics points out, lead to a fall in the savings ratio.

So where does that accounting nightmare leave us? It seems that, taking out the effect of the strong increase in dividends, the savings ratio would have remained roughly stable. Assuming a windfall boost to spending, it should have fallen. So, even if our national statisticians cannot capture the effect of windfall savings, they are there.

You only have to look at record purchases of Peps in unit trusts in the quarter to see that consumers are not abandoning the defensive good sense that has been the hallmark of this low inflation recovery. Inflation hawks at the Bank of England may feel the urge to increase rates again, but the prudence of the public does not justify it.

A vintage approach

Last night there was some merry-making in Dublin as the directors of GPA gathered to toast the future of a company which, not so long ago, looked to have only a hair-raising past. But led by the remarkable Dennis Stevenson, the aircraft leasing company that fell to earth with debts of £3.3 billion is now getting off the ground again, in a new, more restrained, guise.

The terms of the refinancing he engineered prevent Mr Stevenson rushing out and buying a shiny new fleet of aeroplanes, but there would be little danger of that any how. The cerebral Mr Stevenson has effectively turned GPA into a new busi-

ness, selling analysis and advice. Shareholders in Pearson should take note of the extraordinary achievements at GPA. While there has been some carping that the new top team of chairman Stevenson and chief executive Marjorie Scardino have not moved fast enough to produce a dramatic restructuring of the sprawling company, there has been considerable activity.

Some businesses have been sold and important new appointments have been made. Hard decisions are being taken, not least that of putting up for auction almost 1,200 cases of vintage wine. The hangover from the days when the group owned the Chateau Latour vineyard is likely to raise more than £2 million. Selling it rather than quaffing it in the boardroom is indicative of the new regime now installed there.

Surely not...

THE strategy at MEPC is a carefully considered response to the changing conditions in the property market. The decision to buy PSIT, pull out of the United States and Australia, and return at least £300 million to shareholders is obviously intended as a means of building long-term shareholder value. It would be totally malicious to see it as a response to lurking predators, and a threat to management jobs.

GE Capital in £537m Irish takeover

By MARTIN BARROW

GE CAPITAL'S corporate spending spree in Europe continued yesterday when the US company announced a £537 million (£537 million) agreed takeover bid for Woodchester Investments, the Irish leasing company (See Commentary this page).

Ireland's biggest takeover will raise almost £8 million for Craig McKinney, Woodchester's chairman and chief executive. It will also provide a £120 million cash injection for Credit Lyonnais, the ailing French bank that was ordered to sell its 54 per cent interest in Woodchester by the French Government as part of a refinancing plan. Credit Lyonnais has given irrevocable acceptance in respect of its holding. The takeover requires the

approval of the French Treasury, Ireland's Central Bank and the Bank of England, which regulates Woodchester's UK financing businesses.

GE Capital, the financial services arm of America's General Electric, is believed to have seen off rival approaches from Ford Credit and AT&T Capital to secure a recommendation for its terms.

GE has been investing heavily in Europe recently, and has targeted the British Isles. In August it acquired Central Transport Rental, the former Tiphook trailer rental business, for £118 million, having acquired TLS, the commercial vehicle business, for £68.2 million in July. Earlier this year it bought BRS Car Lease and DBS Nationwide, a modular building company.

Woodchester principally operates in motor and equipment leasing and instalment credit, with extensive operations in Britain, Ireland and Portugal. The company also has a 28 per cent interest in Lookers, the UK motor dealer.

Yesterday Woodchester reported a rise in first-half pre-tax profits to £125.1 million, up 17 per cent, with earnings of £18.73p a share, up 18 per cent. In view of the GE Capital offer there is no interim dividend.

Mr McKinney and Dan O'Connor, deputy chief executive, said yesterday that they expected to remain with the company after the takeover. Mr McKinney, a polo-playing Scot, owns 2.6 million Woodchester shares and holds options over a further 759,986 that would yield a profit of £179,961 at the offer price. He founded Woodchester with his brother Jack in 1977.

Redland in joint venture with Lafarge

REDLAND, the roof tiles group, plans to resolve the problems of its French aggregates business through a 50-50 joint venture with Lafarge, the French building materials group (Paul Durman writes).

Redland aims to combine Granulats with Lafarge's sand, gravel and crushed rock business. Granulats sold 29 million tonnes of aggregates last year, while the Lafarge business had sales of 26 million tonnes. Redland also intends to sell its French ready-mix concrete business to Lafarge.



Richard Glover, chief executive of BSM, tries the driving seat of the school's new £25,000 simulator at the Guildford office

BSM steers new course with simulators

TEENAGERS under the age of 17 are being urged by the British School of Motoring to learn to drive using advanced car simulators which have cost the troubled company £25,000 each (Chris Ayres writes).

The company, which suffered a fall

in pre-tax profits to £1.5 million from £2.9 million in the half year to June 27, blamed its poor performance on the introduction of a written test.

Richard Glover, BSM's chief executive, said the company was adversely affected by the Government's decision

to stop learners taking a practical test until they have passed a written test.

"We had no indication that they would introduce that rule," he said. "What has happened is there has been a time lag between people passing their theory tests and taking practical tests.

As far as we can tell, the number of applications has now picked up again."

Turnover for the half year fell to £12.7 million from £13.8 million. Earnings fell to 3.9p a share from 7.5p. The interim dividend is maintained at 2.53p a share, payable on October 10.

Bruntcliffe directors to share total of £2.45m on takeover

By JASON NISSE

DIRECTORS of Bruntcliffe Aggregates, the building materials firm facing a takeover bid from Ennstone, are to receive termination and bonus payments equal to 9.5 per cent of the market value of the company if the £26 million deal goes through.

Ennstone's offer, worth 45p per Bruntcliffe share, is expected to go through in the next few days, leading to the departure of Bruntcliffe's

three executive directors — Mike Wallis, chief executive, Nigel Moreton, finance director, and John Baxter.

They are to receive termination payments of £587,000, £492,000 and £446,000 respectively. In addition they will share a £750,000 takeover bonus. This was included in their service contracts by a deed of variation, signed on Christmas Eve, last year.

The directors are also enti-

tled to cash in share options worth £180,000, taking the total received by the three directors to £2.45 million, or 9.5 per cent of the value of Ennstone's offer.

Sir Bryan Baker, Bruntcliffe's non-executive chairman, was unavailable yesterday but a spokesman for the company said that the shares had doubled in value since the takeover bonus was put in place.

Building safety firm to go public at £15.5m

By OUR CITY STAFF

THE maker of a safety system used to protect workers on high buildings, including Canary Wharf and the Eiffel Tower, is headed for the stock market. Latchways is going public in a flotation that will value the company at £15.5 million.

The company manufactures "fall arrest" safety equipment used by maintenance and construction workers and window cleaners. Other sites where its system is installed

include St Paul's Cathedral and the Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol.

The company is going public by way of a placing with institutional and private investors at 155p a share. Dealing in the shares is due to start on October 3. Latchways, which has a staff of 25, will use the £1.5 million flotation proceeds to expand its international markets.

In the past three years turnover has risen from £1.7 million in 1995 to £3.6 million in the year to April, while pre-tax profits have risen from £401,000 to £1.2 million over the same period.

The flotation is being handled by Bell Lawrie White & Co, the broker, of Glasgow.

PizzaExpress signs Middle East deal

By DOMINIC WALSH

PIZZAEXPRESS has signed a franchise deal that should see at least 30 restaurants open throughout the Middle East over the next four to five years.

The Khorafi group, based in Kuwait, has paid more than £350,000 for the exclusive rights for most Middle Eastern countries, and openings are planned for Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Egypt, Kuwait, Oman and Saudi Arabia. Khorafi staff are currently attending PizzaExpress training courses

in the UK. PizzaExpress has just opened its first overseas franchise in Cyprus.

Also in place are agreements covering France and India, while Turkey, Pakistan, Greece and Russia are all under negotiation. The group's Indian partner, the Modi industrial group, is planning 40 units over ten years, the first of which is due to open this autumn in Delhi.

Hugh Osmond, a director of PizzaExpress, said: "Overseas expansion will not become a significant part of the business

for a couple of years. But if it works well we will up the rate." For each exclusive territory, the company takes an upfront fee, a fee per restaurant opened plus a royalty of about 6 per cent of sales.

Mr Osmond said the focus for the time being would remain the UK and Ireland, where he believes the current total of 150 restaurants could eventually reach 250-300. In the year to June 30, the group opened 32 restaurants at an average cost of about £400,000 each. It expects to add a

further 30 this year. It also bought out 32 franchisees.

The company's rapid rate of expansion fuelled a 58 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £16.2 million on turnover 60 per cent better at £71.1 million. Like-for-like sales were up 9 per cent, and Mr Osmond said trading since the year end had proved "encouraging".

Earnings were 20.1p (13.6p) a share. A final dividend of 2.5p, due on November 12, makes 3.35p for the year (2.7p).

Tempus, page 30



If perfection on the palate exists, this is it.

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STOCK MARKET

GLAIRE STEWART

Equities fail once again to hold the high ground

HOPES of records being set were dashed as the stock market climbed tantalisingly close to its all-time high only to run out of steam.

The FTSE 100 touched 5,095.1 in early trading, but then hit some resistance. It lacked the support seen on Monday from a buoyant futures and gilts market.

The downward drift on Wall Street cast a further shadow and the index of leading UK shares was down 48.2 at 5,027.5, although off the worst of the day. Volumes were 700 million, helped by busy trading in a number of stocks including Shell, BT and BTR. Having almost touched the all-time high, the market withdrew away, with little follow-through from investors,

commented one dealer. Among those bucking the trend was Centrica, putting on 2 1/2p to 90 1/2p, while Railtrack continued its progress with talk of interest from US investors. The shares ended 1 1/2p higher at 867p, a new high for the stock.

Asmea, the oil exploration group, put on 3 1/2p to 260 1/2p on news of the group's further expansion in the Pakistan gas market. Asmea was in demand, with over 12 million shares changing hands and the shares pushed to a new high of 162 1/2p, up 2 1/2p.

At one point SmithKline Beecham shares were trading 2 1/2p higher after news of FDA approval in the US of its Regup drug for the treatment of Parkinson's disease. They dropped back to end 4p higher at 553 1/2p. Other leading drugs groups lost some of their recent gains, with Glaxo easing 7p to £13.56 and Zeneca down 14p to £19.65.

Among healthcare stocks, Biocompatibles was again under pressure, sliding a further 60p to 475p, a new low for the year. British Biotech, reporting a lower than expected loss in the first quarter, rose 3 1/2p to 166p, while Cortec rose 3 1/2p to 199p.

Property groups found support, with British Land up 10p to 615p and Land Securities rising 10 1/2p to 950 1/2p. News of MEPC's plans to sell its US and Australian interests also found favour, with the shares marked 4p higher at 498 1/2p.

There was a busy trade in Guinness shares as the market digested the details of the group's first-half results from Anthony Greener, chairman. In a market eager for news on



Anthony Greener, of Guinness, down 7 1/2p on rate fears

the progress of its merger with Grand Metropolitan and its relationship with LVMH, the shares rose 10p in early trading before closing at 576 1/2p, down 7 1/2p on concern over exchange rate fluctuations.

GrandMet followed Guinness lower, off 5 1/2p to 589 1/2p, while negative broker comment took a further toll on Scottish & Newcastle, the

brewing and leisure group, leaving it down 15p at 727p.

FTSE 100 debutants were again sitting it out, with Woolwich off 7 1/2p to 308 1/2p amid talk of a sell note from SBC Warburg. Billiton, the mining group, another new entrant, was the worst performing FTSE 100 stock, ending 9 1/2p lower at 237p.

Other banks gave up some of their recent gains, with the

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Halifax 12 1/2p lower at 701 1/2p. Barclays off 20p at £15.23, and NatWest down 10 1/2p at 859 1/2p.

Second-liners put in a more robust performance, with the FTSE 250 up 2.7 points at 4,709.9.

Among the best was CRT Group, the acquisition training and recruitment group, backed by Michael Milken, the former junk bond dealer. The shares jumped 13p to 255 1/2p.

Manchester United, which reports next week, put on a burst of speed and added 33 1/2p to close at 662 1/2p. Brokers are forecasting pre-tax profits of around £25 million (£15.4 million).

PizzaExpress was snapped up after rolling out a 58 per cent rise in profits to £16.2 million in the year to June. The shares jumped 31 1/2p to 795p.

News of a bid approach at Arcadian International, the hotel group, sent the shares sharply higher to 65 1/2p, up 15p. They hit a low of 38 1/2p in September.

Hodder Headline, the publishing group, was 16p higher at 190p on stronger first-half results, while AIM-quoted Southern Newspapers, the printing and publishing group, rose 20 1/2p to 749p after year-end results and a strong trading statement.

Selected retailers found favour with Allens up 6p to 241 1/2p after its acquisition of seven Maples stores. Further consideration of good figures from Allens helped its shares nudge 4p higher to 231 1/2p, while Argos rose 8p to 696 1/2p and Harvey Nichols ended 7p ahead at 283 1/2p. Less fortunate was Safeway, which lost 10 1/2p to 385p and Dixons, down 10p to 613 1/2p.

GILT-EDGED: The Bank of England's £15 billion auction of Treasury 7 per cent 2002 was covered 2.3 times, but failed to cause a stir in the gilt market.

The December series of the long gilt closed off £2 1/2 at £117 1/2, with a modest total of 57,000 contracts completed.

At the long end Treasury 8 per cent 2005 ended down £2 1/2 at £114 1/2, while Treasury 8 per cent 2000 was off £1 1/2 at £103 1/2.

NEW YORK: Blue chip shares fell in late morning profit-taking after Monday's rise. The Dow Jones Industrial average was down 27.26 to 7,969.57 at midday.

MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday):
Dow Jones 7969.57 (-27.26)
S&P Composite 952.53 (-2.90)

Tokyo:
Nikkei Average 14,094.38 (-13.70)

Hong Kong:
Hang Seng 14,094.38 (-13.70)

Amsterdam:
AEX Index 908.14 (-1.30)

Sydney:
AO 2776.9 (+12.0)

Frankfurt:
DAX 4098.20 (+9.28)

Singapore:
Straits 1916.10 (+2.87)

Brussels:
General 1399.41 (+5.73)

Paris:
CAC-40 2997.23 (+20.22)

Zurich:
SIX Gen 1191.30 (+2.20)

London:
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End of the journey still not in sight

Pressure is increasing on Margaret Beckett to reach a conclusion on the BA/American and P&O/Stena links, says Philip Bassett

Margaret Beckett's talks yesterday with Karel van Miert, European Competition Commissioner, inched Whitehall, Brussels and Washington further towards being in line on two key competition policy decisions — on British Airways' planned US alliance and the proposed link-up between the main cross-Channel ferry companies.

Even before yesterday's meeting, Whitehall was not expecting the President of the Board of Trade's talks with Mr Van Miert to reach a sudden solution to the long-running sagas over planes and ferries. "If we could find an accommodation, that would be terrific," said one senior official. "But we're just stuck in the middle."

Mrs Beckett's critics — and on her competition decisions, she inevitably has them — don't quite see it that way. They charge her privately with abdicating her responsibility on competition policy and practice, of being too ready to fall into line behind Brussels and Mr Van Miert's decisions. Mrs Beckett's officials emphasise the delicacy and difficulty of trying to resolve complex issues with big commercial consequences.

Labour came into office in May committed to reforming competition law in the UK, and Mrs Beckett has now put out for consultation not just draft proposals to do so but a full Bill in draft form, which is largely being well received. But the Government's drive to reform the framework of UK competition law and bring it into line with Europe — a move welcomed by British business eager to cut back on duplication — does not of course obviate tricky decisions on individual merger plans from specific companies.

Of the two examined by Mrs Beckett and the Commissioner yesterday in talks, which also took in wider aspects of competition policy and law in London and Brussels, the battle over BA's planned alliance with American Airlines is the larger issue.

The bare bones of the argument are that the European Commission looks set to veto the BA-AA link-up unless the two companies surrender 353

weekly take-off and landing slots at Heathrow. Brussels argues that the proposed alliance, which provides for extensive co-operation on flight schedules and fare-setting, would give the two firms unfair market advantage, in that they would control more than 60 per cent of flights between the UK and the US.

For its part, BA argues that the slots are a vital asset of its business, and, if it is to give them up, it should be allowed to sell them, or be recompensed for them. American says it will accept the recommendations of the UK's Office of Fair Trading that 168 slots should be ceded — but not the number sought by Brussels.

Neither side is budging, though with time pressure now on — the airlines want the deal ratified by Washington, London and Brussels by November in order to allow schedules to put in place for next

summer's peak business period — talk behind the scenes is turning to prospects of some kind of agreement.

On ferries, the argument is at least mainly domestic. Pushed by competition from the Channel Tunnel, P&O, the shipping and property group, is planning to merge its cross-Channel ferry operations with Stena, the Swedish company, saving some £75 million out of total costs of £280 million, in a move which would take two ships off the Dover-Calais route and lead to the loss of 400 jobs.

Brussels is concerned that the link-up, which would give the two companies around 40 per cent of the market, would operate separately from the companies' other activities, and in particular would not be cross-subsidised by them. Mr Van Miert is indicating it will veto the link-up unless the companies make concessions.

The Commission's tough stance on ferries has prompted criticism of Mrs

Beckett because it has delayed publication of the UK Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the planned link-up, which the Department of Trade and Industry has had since April. Mrs Beckett has been accused of hiding behind Brussels's skirts, with both companies wanting to get on with their plans.

Whitehall is warding off such attacks, insisting that it is not so much a matter of chiming in with Brussels's timing on either planes or ferries, but more a case of wanting to get the decisions right — right for the companies concerned, right for Europe, right for UK competition policy and particularly right for consumers.

Yesterday's talks, fulsomely described by the DTI as "constructive", are far from the last word on either issue. All sides are sticking to their guns. But all sides would like the cases to be resolved. In such cases, it is axiomatic for all those involved to deny hotly any possibility of an agreement to resolve the issues, usually at the very moment such agreements are being struck. With time pressures on, the timing may look right for just such a move.



ANTHONY HARRIS

There is no such thing as a free capital market

It has been an ideal week for the last appearance of this sceptical column.

First Milton Friedman, the high priest of market economics, denounced economic and monetary union as fatal to the whole EU enterprise, and called for the abolition of the International Monetary Fund, which, he said, has had no raison d'être since the collapse of Bretton Woods in 1971.

The IMF is trying to invent a new role for itself: the liberator of capital markets. But before this was even made official, George Soros, the great practitioner, denounced free capital markets as the source of crises. But according to Dr Mahathir Mohamad, of Malaysia, crises are caused by currency traders — George Soros in particular. Soros evened the score by denouncing Dr Mahathir.

All good clean fun, you may think.

But there are serious points here. The arguments about EMU are familiar to any reader of these pages: but those about free markets in currencies and capital are newish. The free international flow of investment capital has, as the International Monetary Fund argues, been a great agent of development, setting up new industries both in the third world and in bombed-out ex-Communist economies. This is direct investment — the building of factories and sinking of mines; it might have taken a generation or more if left to domestic saving and lending as its only sources of finance.

Free trade in securities looks like part of the same picture: access to foreign wealth, but for native enterprise. True, but these flows have also created obstinate problems, and not just in the third world. Even the strongest, Germany and Switzerland, have been driven to invent special taxes to discourage inflows: they threatened inflation, or currency over-valuation, or both. Singapore and Malaysia have had similar problems. And when the tide turns to ebb, panic may set in, as the Mexicans, the Thais and many others know by now. Markets may be free, but they can be costly.

So, direct investment is a blessing, but the global securities market a curse? That is what Soros seems to suggest; but it is too simple. Direct investors naturally demand control, and are often accused of insensitivity to local needs, or even of neo-colonialism. Cut off stock market flows, and you may hamper the growth of local enterprise. And there is a further complication: the important crises have occurred only in countries which were trying to manage their exchange rates. It was not George Soros who caused the sterling crisis of 1992, but Britain's membership of the ERM. Nearly all the recent crises have been in countries pegged to the dollar.

And currency crises are not the only problem. The speculative excesses that have now boiled over in Thailand happened because local developers could raise finance at cheap US or Japanese interest rates, with no apparent exchange risk. Rates were low because first the US and then Japan cut them to ease domestic banking crises. Thus policies that may be necessary in one economy may prove ruinous in another. This is Friedman's fundamental point against the EMU project.

Perhaps the answer is that market problems demand a market solution — not an International Monetary Fund package (Friedman again), but the risk involved when exchange rates are allowed to float. The point is not to create risk, but to make inherent risk apparent. A direct investor may get his timing or location wrong: a fluctuating exchange rate will preach caution. A foreign stockholder may imagine that he can always sell out: exchange risk underlies the losses that could be involved. Economic development depends on people ready to take risk; but it also demands that they should be wary. So the free movement of capital will work best only when exchange rates are free to move, too. (This would leave George Soros without any profitable crises; but the man is a philanthropist, after all.)

And so a fond (though not final) farewell to my readers. Future columns will be longer, but fewer.

How to become a Richer guru and actually boost business

Chris Ayres on the way a hi-fi retailer became a leading management consultant

Basil Fawley would have hated Julian Richer. The 38-year-old founder of the Richer Sounds hi-fi chain would not have allowed Basil to bully his waiters, mention the war, or shout at his customers.

Richer would have told the ratty hotel manager to hire a Rolls-Royce for his staff or to give them free holidays as a reward for hard work, and he would have made Basil measure the performance of his hotel by customer service.

Such schemes have not only helped Richer to build a personal fortune of more than £50 million through his own retail chain, but have also made him famous in the world of management training. His advice has been sought by some of Britain's leading companies, including Asda, Sears and Halfords.

Richer, whose hi-fi shops business holds the world record for having an outlet with the highest sales per square foot, recently put his maverick ideas on management style into a book called *The Richer Way*.

The book is becoming mandatory reading for holidaying executives — Rod Aldridge, chairman of the £500 million outsourcing group Capita, was recently spotted clutching a copy as he left the country for his annual break.

The success of the book encouraged Richer to set up Richer Consulting late last year. As a newcomer in a sector already oversupplied



Kate Donaghy teamed up with Julian Richer after she listened to him give a talk on management to staff at Asda

with firms aiming to sell advice, this one is making a rapid impact. Already it has secured contracts with a diverse range of customers, from tiny unlisted businesses to multinational corporations.

"We are interested in how to motivate people, measure service and reward it. Then we can create an enjoyable experience for the customer," says Kate Donaghy, who set up the consultancy with Richer.

"Many companies feel they are working financially but missing something with their customers. We have worked with a leisure park which had found that people's jobs were unclear, and we helped them sort that out. Then we put in measurement techniques for how people were paid."

Donaghy, a former lawyer, became interested in management after founding a head-hunting business, Richmond

and Co, in the early 1990s. She met Richer after listening to him give a talk on management to staff at Asda. His ideas and enthusiasm inspired her to write to him giving him her support, and within weeks they had met and become friends.

But Donaghy is not a typical Richer Consulting employee. All the company's eight directors are former Richer Sounds sales assistants, and many of

them, like Richer himself, have not been to university.

Richer avoided higher education because he found he could make more money from selling hi-fi than going to his college in Bristol.

He left school with three A levels and went on to borrow £20,000 to open his first Richer Sounds outlet at London Bridge. The company soon became financially successful and renowned for its customer

service. When the business's resources grew, Richer invited new employees to three-day training sessions at his home in York. During the training, they could play tennis, badminton and snooker, and also had access to a cinema, a disco and a swimming pool.

In spite of Richer's success, Donaghy is aware that many management techniques are still seen as gimmicks. This has led satirical television shows such as *The Day Today* and *The Saturday Night Armistice* to parody gurus such as Richer.

In one sketch from *The Day Today*, employees learnt how to deal with stress by having to look after a live pig which was released into their office. In *The Saturday Night Armistice* unwitting employees from an unnamed company were sent to a spoof conference to play surreal and pointless games. "We do fun things," Donaghy says. "You can call them gimmicks or whatever you want, but under the surface there is improved customer service. For example, Richer Sounds has a league of customer service, and if you come top of the league you get the use of the Rolls-Royce for a week. But it's also the recognition of staff that's important."

Richer Consulting advises on all aspects of customer service, from strategy and planning to measurement. It also helps customers to set up reward schemes, suggestion schemes and to improve internal communication.

But Donaghy recognises that customer service also means more than just a friendly sales assistant. "We believe in the integrity of the product and the processes and friendliness with which it is delivered," she says.

"It's also about the quality, reliability and serviceability of the product. There is no point in someone telling you, with a big smile on their face, that they can't give you the product you want."

Bank deposit

JOHN MCFARLANE, the high-flyer whose departure from Standard Chartered surprised us all in February, has bounced nicely. The man who left because, as chairman Patrick Gillam put it then: "John now feels that he can make a more strategic role elsewhere", has done just that, re-emerging as chief executive officer and pretty well lord of all he surveys at Australia and New Zealand Bank, one of the big four down under. McFarlane, in one of those careers that makes me wonder why I persist with my own, was drafted in to Standard Chartered from Citibank in 1993 in



Patrick Gillam saw a more strategic role for McFarlane

the wake of the Indian scandal. He now whizzes off to Melbourne. At the age of 50, we always thought that McFarlane left Standard Chartered after being tipped the wink that he would not get the chief executive's job. His former colleagues were being coy on whether he received a payoff to compensate for this crushing disappointment, but he did leave with options worth £1.5 million potentially. It's a dog's life in investment banking.

IT WAS always a misconceived idea of the strictly mutual Britannia Building Society to try to squash Jon Massey, publisher of *The Carpetbaggers* Accomplish, by kicking him out and closing his account. All this achieved was to give him more prominence than some might say he deserves. Now Massey has put two fingers up to them by dedicating the third edition of the booklet to the Britannia.

Run riot

FROM Bank tube station, cross Cornhill and cut down to Lombard Street. Can you see a "dull grey office block"? Down towards Cannon Street, by my reckoning, which probably makes it to the east of St



Swithins Lane. The actual dealing room is dingy and low-ceilinged (aren't they all?) containing 15, maybe 20, traders. The only other clue I have is the carpet, "cheap blue and tiled". Not much to go on, but if you can identify this foreign exchange dealer, you know where Jon Stock did the research for his first novel *The Riot Act*.

Stock, a stranger to the world of the City, was smuggled into two forex dealing rooms last year as part of his research for the thriller, published this week. He is therefore honour-bound not to reveal which dealers, but one at least matches the above description. "A mate of mine let me come in and sit on the dealing room floor for a while to pick up on the banter," he says.

His central character makes

a similar journey into the unknown. A Swampy-like environmental protester, he is forced to shave off his dreadlocks and take up a job in the City, for reasons too complex to detail us here. The idea came from a genuine character Stock met on his explorations, a middle-class drop-out activist who is now a successful forex dealer — and is now worried that his past life will one day be revealed.

OH DEAR. Oh dear, I really shouldn't be allowed to write about sport. *Damian Griffiths, bond dealer at Cantor Fitzgerald, has contacted me, more in sorrow than in anger, to point out that Rob Kitchen, one of his colleagues, is not only a scrum half, rather than fly half as I suggested yesterday, but he has also not been posted abroad. Indeed he was sitting but 20 feet away from Griffiths when we spoke. Sorry.*

As I reported, Cantors has pulled out of this weekend's *Reuters* rugby sevens. The company's success in previous tournaments has given rise to endless rumours about ringers being slipped in, which Griffiths indignantly denies and puts down to envy. This year's no-show is blamed on a series of injuries sustained at tournaments abroad — these guys take their rugby seriously. Plus "a certain amount of apathy" and the rival attractions of something called the Ryder Cup.

Touché

DEPRESSING, isn't it, when highly paid consultants screw up? My day was ruined by the news of Deloitte & Touche's ill-advised decision to revamp their own pension scheme in the US. Deloitte has a good reputation there as pensions adviser. Its employees were promised improvements in pensions benefits and almost all 14,000 signed up. Afterwards they got their calculators out — and found that payouts would fall by as much as 70 per cent. Staff are furious, and head bean-counters deeply embarrassed. God knows what the clients think.

MARTIN WALLER



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The ring of confidence for today's businesses

Tektronix. A caller from, say, Helsinki, simply makes a local charge call to the centre in Britain where the inquiry is dealt with.

Call centres will be deployed more widely across Europe as telecoms are liberalised, but it will be some years before Britain's popularity as a site will be rivalled

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12

هذا من الامثلة

Don't keep your callers in 'voice-mail jail'

A more comprehensive code of practice for call centres could mean freedom for those who are trapped in "voice-mail jail" — where an automated system fails to deal with their query but does not connect them to an operator.

Bill Mieran, chairman of the Telecom Users' Association, says: "We get complaints from customers about being asked to hold by an automated message, then spending ten minutes waiting to talk to an operator before hanging up in frustration. People say they would prefer an engaged tone, as they are paying for the call."

The problem is usually caused because the call centre has insufficient staff. Unless dealt with, this groundswell of customer complaints could damage the call centre business.

The association is working with the Call Centre Association, a national professional body representing 150 call centres, in putting together a new code of practice. Linley French, the CCA's business manager, says: "Most call centres say they aim to answer 95 per cent of calls within ten seconds, but how many achieve these targets? Do they start counting from when the phone first rings or from the point where the customer chooses the first option? How many calls are abandoned when the customer gets fed up with holding?"

Poor communications between a firm's departments can be the cause of problems for customers. Mr French explains: "Sometimes a marketing department doesn't tell the call centre it is doing a big mail-out. We encourage our members to improve internal communications so that they can adjust staff levels for busy times."

"After all, if another company can answer calls more quickly than they can, the customer will go there. We also encourage our members to have in place a communications channel, so that customer complaints can be noted and dealt with."

Sue Spenceley Burch on the need for a call-centre code of practice to improve customer service

A survey from business telecommunications specialists Energis claims that companies which do not answer their calls quickly enough are losing millions of pounds each year. It revealed that 10 per cent of all incoming calls go unanswered by large businesses; smaller firms slightly better, at around 6 per cent. Call centre technology, used properly, enables companies to be far more effective at dealing with incoming calls.

To help call centres to find out how their customers feel, British Telecom's call centre subsidiary, Connections in Business, has developed a research tool called Satisfactel. Researchers phone customers within 24 hours of them contacting the call centre and take them through a detailed questionnaire. It reveals what the customer expected, how well the service matched up and how their experience of calling the centre has affected their attitude towards the company.

Jon Reynolds, head of sales and client services at Connections in Business, says: "Our own research shows that older people are more uncomfortable about automated systems and leaving messages, but are becoming increasingly familiar with the technology. Younger, more technology-aware people say that they don't mind an automated service if the application is fairly straightforward. They see it as efficient."

Automated services can be useful in helping a company to deal with a large volume of calls. During August, when violent and unexpected electrical storms hit the South of

England, Seeboard, the electrical supplier for the region, had to cope with widespread power failures caused by lightning and floods.

During most storms, the company — which serves 4.6 million people — would expect to receive 5,000 to 15,000 emergency calls from customers.

During this particular storm and its aftermath, Seeboard received 24,700 calls in 24 hours, reaching a high of 2,950 an hour.

The company used a recorded message which informed customers about supply failures it was already dealing with, encouraging them to end their call unless reporting a new problem.

Staff on shift were able to cope with those customers who needed to speak to an operator, while other staff were brought in to enable

Seeboard to answer 60 per cent of calls within 20 seconds. The recorded message was continually updated with new information and, once each problem was resolved, staff rang customers they had spoken to, to ensure that their power was back on. Every customer had their supply restored within 24 hours.

Seeboard uses a Siemens ISDX network and BT lines. It connects the customer service application to the ISDX switch with Rostrom software from royalblue.

Large volumes of calls can also be expected when a company advertises on TV and includes a hotline number. Jon Reynolds says: "In this type of situation you tend to get a huge influx in a very short time — up to 500 simultaneous calls — so the solution has to be a combination of live and automatic answering."

The problems which customers encounter with call centres stem, he believes, from companies using the technology to make up for understaffing. "Wallpapering over the cracks just makes things worse," he says. "The technology should be used for the right reasons, not just superficial ones."



During August's electrical storm Seeboard received 24,700 calls in 24 hours — peaking at around 2,950 per hour

Talking your way into a good job

RECRUITMENT

Growth in call centres is producing jobs for people with the right skills, Sue Spenceley Burch writes.

The Merchants Group is one of Europe's largest call centre consultancies, with 450 agents at its Milton Keynes headquarters. Its director of human resources, Cheryl Clifford, explains what she looks for when recruiting.

"Certain basic attributes are common to all good call centre agents — the ability to articulate clearly and to control and direct a conversation," she says. "Real listening skills are also vital — plus the ability to read between the lines and develop rapport and empathy with the caller. We currently handle a project on the subject of birth control and we screened job applicants very carefully for their ability to handle such a sensitive issue."

There is also an increasing demand for people with languages. Merchants Group runs an international help-desk for Tektronix colour printers, covering 43 countries. Calls are handled in ten languages. Around 10 per cent of Merchants Group's staff are non-UK nationals handling calls in their mother tongue, with a further 27 per cent of staff being UK nationals with language skills.

To ensure that they are working effectively, call centre staff are subject to intense scrutiny. In some centres supervisors listen to live calls during training sessions. A new control system for call centres — NiceAudit, produced by Nice Systems Ltd — uses digital voice recording and evaluation software. Managers record calls, play them back and use them for training.

Working in a call centre is demanding, with a great deal of pressure to perform well at all times — some-

times dealing with difficult or even abusive customers. The Merchants Group trains staff to control their moods and emotions. Otherwise the effects of a stressful call may be visited on the next caller.

Recent research has revealed discontent among staff working in some call centres. A Calcom survey found that only 40 per cent of those surveyed said morale was high in their workplace. More than half spent 90 per cent of their time on the phone and said this led to boredom and frustration.

While two thirds said they received regular positive feedback on their performance, some said they only had feedback when it was negative.

Another common complaint was the lack of career opportunities, because call centres often have very flat structures.

Ben White, of Calcom, a tele-business consultancy specialising in call centres, explains: "Lots of businesses have leapt into call centres. The survey highlighted gaps where investment is needed in training and development of operators and managers."

"The focus is often on developing systems and product knowledge, but a call centre's main resource is its people. Often managers are moved into the call centre from elsewhere in the business and their people skills may be overlooked. Managers need to bear in mind that phone work can be routine and a motivational environment is essential."

Two thirds of those Calcom surveyed were also unhappy about pay — recent research by the Merchants Group found that salary levels for call centre agents average around £11,800 a year. During the next five years, Cheryl Clifford expects salaries to increase in line with the more demanding skills required.



Cheryl Clifford: listening skills

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Why not change the way we work?

How the regions plugged in

Susan Gray looks
at call centre job
growth around
the country

From chasing up a parking fine in North London to ordering a mail-order CD from Virgin, telephone users are finding that call centres, often based in remote parts of the UK regions, are playing an increasing role in our lives.

Call centres are also playing a vital role in the economies of many parts of the British Isles from Lasair in the Western Isles to Telford New Town between Birmingham and the Welsh Marches. By its nature the teleservices industry is highly mobile, and British regions are competing with other areas of Europe, especially the Netherlands and the Irish Republic, as well as the Asia Pacific region and India, where labour is cheaper.

John Poore, the senior press officer with Highlands and Islands Enterprise, covering half the land mass of Scotland, says: "Our people are highly skilled, highly educated, flexible and loyal. We are looking at the value-added end of the market that is less prone to fluctuations. We cannot compete with the Asia Pacific region on wages, therefore we do the cerebral work such as designing the software that makes teleservices information technology work."

Robert Hartley, the director of Telford Development Agency, says that in attracting call centres regions should not try to be all things to all men. In August Telford announced it had attracted 450 jobs at the new Talking Pages call centre, joining Sunlight Services, dealing with commercial laundry, and the charity People's Dispensary for Sick Animals.

Telford has a good reputation as a manufacturing centre, with the highest concentration of Japanese and Taiwanese companies in the UK, he says. "We felt we had the people, buildings and IT infrastructure to go for a segment of the call centre market. Many of these companies want to be up and running quickly and Telford can offer the training support that enables them to do that."

"We are not going to get the 1,000 job call centres that go to Warring-



Making light work of those old heavy headsets

LIGHTWEIGHT, ergonomic, easy-to-wear headsets are taken for granted in today's call centres. But early headsets in use in the 1950s, like the one pictured above left, weighed 1.2lb — roughly equivalent to wearing today's standard business telephone around your neck.

"Obviously the major benefit was to allow telephone operators to have both hands free to use the switchboard," said Wendy Chalmers

Mill, a physiotherapist, when asked her opinion of the ergonomic aspects of the development in headset weights. "However, it is possible that the old-style design could have had some potentially damaging effects upon the operator's posture. Most of the 1.2lb weight would be taken by the neck and upper back."

"If you look closely at the photograph, the weight of the headset is pulling the upper

body forward, outside its normal centre of gravity, which could affect the spinal muscles and joints in the long term."

In the 1960s, the headset evolved into a slightly less cumbersome model weighing just over half a pound — equivalent to the combined weight of two mobile telephones.

Today, Plantronics' lightest headset, the TribStar, pictured right, weighs just 12 grams — not much more than a ballpoint pen.



Evolution, not revolution, in sales efficiency

SETTING UP

The ingredients of a call centre are simple enough: a suitable building, the right sort of phone and computer system and some well-trained people to answer the calls. What is it about this combination that has turned Littlewoods from a mail order to a phone order company? What is it that has reduced the ratio of staff per account by a factor of ten to one in some banks? Call centre magic?

Not magic simply an efficient use of skilled people through the business support process. Selling insurance direct has to be a good thing if you can sell the same number of policies at half the cost. Direct selling has been an ongoing revolution for some time — it would be almost impossible without the call centre's ability to handle vast numbers of calls efficiently.

The evolution of the call centre within a company is not difficult to trace. The company often starts doing business by phone by using the existing PBX. It soon becomes apparent that the PBX loses lots of calls because agents are busy.

Out goes the PBX in favour of a system that queues the calls and that lets you know what's going on. It is then clear that most of the agents' time is spent updating records. The whole process is then computerised and some software is bought that is easy to use.

The company now has a modern call centre; the next stage is to tie the phone system and the computing system together. This is where CTI (computer telephony integration) comes in. The agents get information on screen when they need it — popped up as the calls arrive. Call durations reduce, and difficult calls can be transferred, with their data screens, to someone more able to deal with them.

Both efficiency and customer service have improved: which is the more important? A recent survey by the Merchants Group showed

that 36 per cent of call centre managers thought that customer service was their number one driver. However, 35 per cent of the 109 call centres involved in the exercise rated increased revenues number one. Fortunately, CTI can satisfy both needs — and supply better management information. Call centres are famous for their ability to flood managers' desks with statistics. In bringing together telephone and computer reports, CTI can make this data useful.

In addition to CTI, an interactive voice response system can be installed to automate some of the work and provide 24-hour service. Callers have to respond to the system by pressing buttons on their phones, but this will soon be supplemented by speech recognition technology.

Meanwhile, many customers are joining the million or so Internet users in the UK. They want direct access to the company from their screens, by-passing the call centre. Fedex claimed to have saved itself up to \$500,000 each month by providing direct access to parcel tracking information in this way. But some Net users still want to talk to the call centre when things get tough. A "call me" button is provided on the company's Web page.

Business has increased, but the call centre has now shrunk. Some agents work from home, logging in to the centre when they wish to, or being asked to take overflow calls. Is this the end of the evolutionary line? No: the IT department finds a new system. Here the phone and computer systems are reduced to one small box. And the agents no longer need a separate phone and PC: the PC has a wireless link to their headsets. The box has swallowed the interactive voice machine and can spit out faxes and e-mails at the touch of a button. The company buys it — and then moves the call centre into one small room.

ROB WALTERS

China here, can I help you?

TO FUNCTION effectively, call centres need networks that carry information, be it voice, video or data traffic, from main computers to operators' screens.

The faster an individual screen can capture data, the greater the range of calls and queries the operator is able to deal with. As networking grows more complex, operators in call centres are more able to act as one-stop shops, accessing data from many sources to provide the information a customer requires.

NETWORKS

Howard Shaw, Berkshire-based managing director of European operations at the Swiss-owned Ascom Timeplex, says: "The key to a call centre is that it can pursue information down many routes. A bank, for example, will need operators to offer information on savings, pensions, mortgages, insurance and lending, to name but a few, together with current account information."

Call centres, he says, are changing the way people work. More employees are in direct contact with the customer. Their access to more complex information reduces the need for specialists. Ascom was one of the first companies to supply networking to call centres: there are now four or five leading companies in the business. The information it supplies to British Telecom includes the

192 directory inquiry service and Child Line.

Mr Shaw says that networking enables call centres to operate from rural areas. "An operator working from home with a regional accent is often seen as offering the most friendly service to customers," he says.

Organisations are using call centres to set up where labour costs are lower. One mobile telephone company, for example, services all its Far East inquiries from China, where wages are low.

Don't panic, sir. Try switching on

HELPLINES

MORE and more smaller companies are discovering the marketability of customer service. Rob Walters writes.

Many call centres are dedicated to support, where calls are routed to service engineers, most of whom are on the road. At one extreme lies support operations such as the Microsoft help desks. At the other lies the small company that sells PC networks to companies similar in size.

Most of the calls are simple queries. All help desk agents have their favourite tales of faults cured by gently telling the frantic callers where the on/off button for their printer/fax machine or appliance is located.

At the large end, call centres are usually based upon specialised telephone systems called automatic call distribution (ACDs). At the small end the business is usually based on a key system. Here the ACD functions are added by connecting a PC with specialised software to the system. BT distributes an ACD system for

Norstar which does just this. Four hundred have been installed in the past three years. Richard Peers of Microsoft quotes the US-based Multimedia Telecommunications Association in projecting that growth in the informal call centre market will be 58.6 per cent with the large call centre growing at only 7.8 per cent.

But Microsoft is also viewed as the force that will cut the cost of integration. Computer telephony integration (CTI) has great benefits but is hard to install, and costly. Microsoft joined the CTI scene with its announcement of TAPI, a method of interfacing to the telephone world via Windows. TAPI2 has been developed in a direct response to the call centre market.

But another solution for the small-to-medium size company is a call centre in a box. These products are PC-based. One example is Macfarlane's MTS CallPlus. Such products should simplify the installation and support of integrated systems.

EXHIBITIONS

TECHNOLOGY for current and future applications of computer telephony integration (CTI) will be featured at the sixth annual Voice Europe exhibition at Olympia 2 from October 7 to 9.

More than 200 companies from 14 countries are exhibiting. The programme includes four conferences, with more than 80 speakers. A Call Centre tutorial is being staged on October 6 and a symposium on speech recognition on October 6 and 7.

Guest speakers at a three-day computer telephony/voice congress will include Richard Peers, business development manager for Microsoft UK, and Tom Schuster, managing director of Novell UK.

Later in the season, from November 24 to 26, is the TMA 30 Convention at Brighton. The conference that runs alongside it is expected to attract some 1,000 delegates from the ranks of top corporate management and will be chaired on successive days by Peter Sissons, Anna Ford and Jeremy Patten. Speakers include Sir Peter Boufield, chief executive of BT, and Don Cruickshank, Ofel's regulator. Details 01372 361000.

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Please apply in writing, enclosing a full CV, to Lucy Prior, BZW Services Limited, Markets Human Resources, 5 The North Colonnade, Canary Wharf, London, E14 4BB. The closing date for applications is Friday 10 October 1997.

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Enquiries: More detailed information on the Administrative Service is available on the Civil Service Bureau Home Page on the Internet at <http://www.bsm.hk/hkgaib>. For further enquiries, please telephone 44-171-499-9621 or send e-mail to csbs@csg.gov.hk.

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Further details are available from the Administrator, School of Management Studies, Radcliffe Infirmary, Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 6HE, telephone (01865) 259470 to whom applications should be made, together with curriculum vitae and the names of two referees. The closing date for applications is Friday 10 October 1997 and interviews will be held the following week.

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For a brochure and application form please write, enclosing your CV, to Tony Ellis, The Ski Company, Stone Square House, Holborn Place, London SW1W 8NS.

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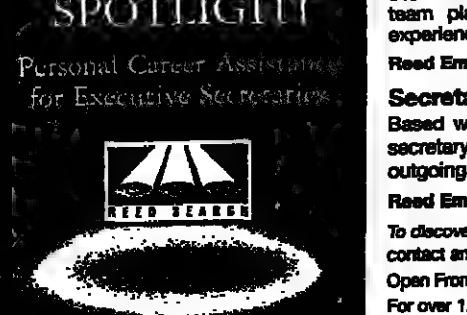
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Please contact David on 0171 589 2446.
Ref: TCPR/001

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A shorthand secretary with advanced knowledge of Word for Windows and PowerPoint, and a typing speed of at least 80wpm is required for a busy legal department based in SW1. The ideal candidate will have four years' experience, be highly organised and have the ability to work to strict deadlines. Salary £19,000.

Please contact David on 0171 589 2446.
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We are looking for a secretary with excellent Word for Windows and Excel experience to work for a small Management Consultancy firm in Central London. You will be involved at every level and will therefore need to be both flexible and dynamic. Salary £16,000.

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An Audio secretary with good knowledge of WP5.1 is required for surveying company in North London. This is a varied position, which includes covering reception and general office duties, and would require a typing speed of 65wpm+. Salary £15,000.

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My Rolf Harris serenade

Many secretaries have worked their way up by sheer determination, and Irma Imran, aged 30, is one of them. She was born in England, but studied in a convent school in Pakistan until she was ten, switching to secondary school in Bradford.

She remembers the brother of a convent schoolfriend telling her: "If you can type, you will never be out of work" and, as a teenager, she taught herself keyboard skills with the aid of library books.

Ms Imran also armed herself with eight O levels and topped as a secretary, which gave her all-round experience in audio typing and wordprocessing packages. "At the time," she says, "I was also doing part-time research connected with the Asian community for Yorkshire Television."

Her ambition was to work for BBC Television in London, where the most interesting jobs were. It would be difficult, she soon realised, because the jobs were first advertised internally in *Ariel*, the staff newspaper. So she paid for copies to be sent to her and began applying.

She says: "I concentrated on those in production, hoping for something like *Top of the Pops*." Her perseverance paid off. "It took me six months before I got a job. In 1994, on *QED*, the BBC documentary programme, I worked as a production secre-

Hundreds of secretaries want to work in television.

Irma Imran talks to Joan Llewellyn Owens about getting the kind of position that many dream of but few achieve

tary to the unit manager and the commissioning editor. They interviewed quite a few people, and I was appointed because of the way I coped with the test. This involved prioritising tasks. I was faced with a filing tray containing letters to be answered, messages requiring action, faxes to be sent and documents to be filed. I had to write down what I would do first and why.

"At the end of the interview, they asked: 'Anything else?' I said that I really wanted the job and would do my very best for them." She also told them how in her kitchen at home her spice jars were all labelled and set out in rows, and her friends always commented on how well organised she was.

Ms Imran told her interviewers: "Can you imagine what I'm going to be like once you are paying me? The stationery cupboard will be as neat and tidy as my kitchen cupboard."

As a production secretary, Ms Imran dealt with mail and phone calls, kept the diary and a scrapbook of cuttings, typed schedules for programmes, kept track of everything and everything, and made sure that all deadlines were met.

She recalls: "I let my bosses know I was interested in filming, and when the crews were working nights or weekends I would volunteer to provide coffee or to help with crowd control."

"One day the woman who was

The stationery cupboard will be as neat as my kitchen cupboard, I told the interviewer

"I had been a little nervous about meeting Rolf Harris, but he was wonderful, and did lots of drawings for us. I had to make sure a car was sent for him, provide tea when he arrived and get his lunch."

Harris: "He was wonderful"



Harris: "He was wonderful"

doing *Animal Hospital* said to me: 'I am going to give you the nicest job. You can look after Rolf Harris.' Then, *Animal Hospital* went out on BBC1 three times a day — live — for five days. The first show was at noon, and so we had to be at the first production meeting at 7am. We often worked a 16-hour day. My boss gave me a free rein, and I helped to set up our production office near the hospital in North London.

the BBC's training scheme and promoted to production assistant (PA), the producer's shadow, handling a budget of perhaps £50,000 or £100,000 and in charge of deciding how the money should be spent.

She worked on *QED* and *Hospital Watch*, but eventually decided to leave the BBC and to read for a degree in Urdu and Development Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies in Central London.

For several years she had been working with the Bradford Heritage Recording Unit, which aims to build up an archive of the community in pictures and words. Ninety per cent of the Pakistani community in England are from Mirpur, she says, and to help with this archive she has recently gone there with a photographer to interview its people.

On her return, she helped to set up an exhibition, called *Home from Home*, which was shown first in Bradford, is now in Birmingham and is due this month to go to Bailey in West Yorkshire (for details, tel: 01274 631750).

"Everything I did for other people as a secretary, I apply to the way I organise my life now," she says. "I am very busy, and time management and the ability to prioritise are an important part of my work."

● NEXT WEEK: Tips on software skills



Imran: "One day a woman told me she was going to give me the nicest job"

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The remuneration offered for this post is negotiable but will accurately reflect the importance attached to this appointment.

Please send a detailed CV, with covering letter explaining how you match the above profile to: John Edmondson, Chairman's Office Administrator, The Ogden Group of Companies, Boston Hall, Boston Spa, Yorkshire, LS23 6AD

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Salary on application. Twenty-five days holiday per annum. Hours 9.30 - 5.30.

Please send your CV with a covering letter (quoting ref TQM/ADWP/0797) to: Carol Edkins, Investment Property Database, 7/8 Essex Road, London NW1 0AP. Tel: 0171 482 5149 Fax: 0171 257 8208 Email: manager@ipindex.co.uk

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ADMINISTRATIVE CREME

ADMIN ASSISTANT/WORD PROCESSOR OPERATOR

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Swing towards Spain

Diana Wildman on how the Ryder Cup has brought buyers to Valderrama

Golf's ultimate competition — the Ryder Cup — is taking place this weekend at Valderrama Golf Club, set within the 4,000-acre Sotogrande leisure estate in southern Spain. With 30,000 ticket holders expected each day and 600 million television viewers tuning in, the area is preparing itself for worldwide recognition.

Sterling's strength against a continuing weak peseta combined with the booming British economy is, for the first time in six years, attracting the British buyer back to the Costa del Sol.

Vastly improved road links now mean that Sotogrande is a 75-minute drive from Malaga airport and only 15 minutes from Gibraltar and only 15 minutes from the massive publicity the Ryder Cup is generating, has already resulted in an upturn in sales.

James Stewart, director-general of Valderrama, which has its own sales division linked to Sotheby's International Realty in London, says: "We will never obtain publicity like this again. We have sold 17 plots of land at Los Altos de Valderrama, our private estate edging the fourth and fifth greens and fairways. "Most of these have been to members who already own property within Sotogrande but who now want to upgrade. Prices range from about £90,000 for an acre plot to more than £250,000 for more than two acres in prime position. For a buyer keen to acquire a completed home, we have a spacious four-bedroom villa in one acre, with pool and spectacular views, for an asking price of £600,000."

Valderrama Estates is also selling the remaining five town houses of 19 at Los Patios de Valderrama costing from £230,000 to £400,000 for the three- to six-bedroom homes situated in a courtyard edging the seventh fairway and part of the nine-hole short course. Mr Stewart adds: "There



Los Patios de Valderrama villas are in a courtyard edging the seventh fairway and part of the nine-hole short course

are already 37 golf courses along the Costa del Sol, but what we have lacked on this coast are major leisure investors to bring in facilities to complement these such as Disneyworld. There are vast amounts of space here and we surely have, in this wave of publicity, the opportunity to create a sophisticated leisure region."

To the east of Sotogrande, 15 minutes' drive from Marbella and set in the Benahavis foothills, is La Zagaleta, a magnificent 2,200-acre estate complete with private golf course, riding club, tennis, trout and carp lakes, shooting range and deer. A sophisticated, secure, private estate, there are plans to build a maximum of 400 homes. To date, 45 houses have been completed and 95 plots sold. Prices for a plot start at £350,000 for two acres and from £1 million for a four-bedroom house complete with pool and stunning views. Three of the latter are now

ready for occupation. Naomi Greatbanks of Knight Frank, the UK agent, says: "The facilities, which include a bar and restaurant, are solely for the use of residents and their guests, guaranteeing a relaxed and private atmosphere."

Nicholas Wells-Hunt, a spokesman for the estate, says: "There is no doubt that the Ryder Cup is affecting the whole coast. This estate is for the wealthy, keen on total seclusion who are prepared to pay £10,000 a year to keep the golf course, stabling and the clubhouse facilities for owners' use only."

"Most purchasers prefer to choose their own location, drawing up their own plans and build under our supervision. But there is always someone who wants to move

in quickly, so we have a small selection of completed properties available."

The Sotogrande estate is taking the opportunity given by the Ryder Cup to change its previous image as an elegant summer hideaway into a complete tourist centre. Candida Taylor, commercial director, says: "Sotogrande is diversifying. We used to market only real estate, with facilities including a private marina, two golf clubs and two beach clubs. Now we are opening a pay-and-play 18-hole golf course called Sotogrande Alto. Its focal point will be a 150-bedroom hotel with health spa and leisure centre, which is due for completion within 18 months. For the first time, we plan to let our properties through tour opera-

tors and will include golf and beach club facilities."

Sotogrande SA is selling new marina properties at between £83,000 and £330,000. There is also a selection of classically styled three and four-bedroom detached houses set in a minimum quarter-acre plot adjacent to, or with views over, the new golf course. Prices are from £175,000 and include a share in the privately owned Sotogrande Golf Club.

That the Ryder Cup will bring enormous publicity to this southernmost region of Spain is not in doubt. It is to be hoped that local planning authorities will take advantage of any increased investment to agree to practical but sensitively designed commercial and residential developments.

Valderrama Estates 00 3456 791206, fax 00 3456 794506; Knight Frank 0171-629 6171, fax 0171-753 0638; Sotogrande SA, 0171-351 2385, fax 00 3456 790330

Simon Brooke on the demand for show homes

Showing off the finished article

The "show flat" or "show house" is an increasingly important marketing tool for property developers and estate agents. Louise Counsell, of Try Homes says: "Some people are saying that though the demand for properties is great, there is no need for show flats, but they have been proved wrong. Show homes can maximise values and help to close a sale, as well as help buyers to visualise completed properties."

Try Homes has two developments on offer, each with a show flat. The Pipe Building overlooking the Thames in Fulham is a development of one to four-bedroom loft apartments, many with double-height ceilings. The aggressively modern style meant that the show flat needed furnishings and accessories to suit. Gail Taylor, of the interior designers TMH, went for bright orange easy chairs and abstract prints in the living room. In the mezzanine dining area she chose a natural wood dining suite in severe geometric style.

Peninsula Barracks, a development of flats and townhouses in a 17th-century military encampment in the centre of Winchester, Hampshire, required a more classic look. Comfortable chairs and tables, patterned wallpaper and fabrics were placed alongside antiques. "It has to be more than the buyers would do for themselves, but not too grand," Ms Taylor says. "You don't want to put people off."

Like most developers, Try Homes researches its potential clientele, then briefs the interior designer on the style and tone of the show house. The designer will buy furniture, fabrics, pictures and everything from cutlery and crockery to linen and lampshades. Ms Taylor adds: "You have to 'accessorise' everything. We even buy bottles of olive oil for the kitchen. Antiques are usually rented from dealers. The show house is the first item in a development to be

built or refurbished. This can put pressure on the designers. Ms Taylor says: "The developer might insist that the flat is launched the next day, in which case you find yourself working until midnight amid wet paint and men in hard hats. You often see beautiful settings being carried in across muddy building sites."

Fountain House in Park Lane, Mayfair, which comprises four substantial penthouses on offer for up to £4 million, was launched 18 months ago. One was developed into a show flat, and, as often happens, this was the first to sell. The other three remained unsold until a second was chosen to become a show flat. This was snapped up in days, and now the developers are considering furnishing and decorating the remaining two.

For the layman, working out how to make full use of a large space can be challenging. Jane Rodney, who was responsible for the interior design of Fountain House, says: "People wonder where to put a dining table or settee. Even if what you've done is not to their taste, they can at least get an idea. Sometimes they will rip out

everything you've done, but commission you to give the property a new look."

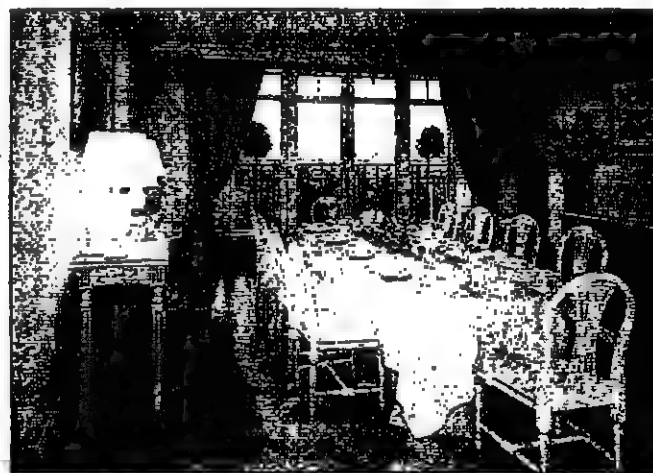
Ms Rodney has become a show flat expert. She works on the more expensive properties with a budget of up to £300,000, and the prestige of her projects allows her to borrow expensive antiques and furnishings. "You're trying to do something that appeals to every-

body," she says. "It's got to be gorgeous, and if it's for a £4.5 million property it has to be grand. I usually go for the Mid-European look rather than the classic British style: strong colours and striking materials. I used fabric that was £900 a square metre on cushions in one property; but they really made the room."

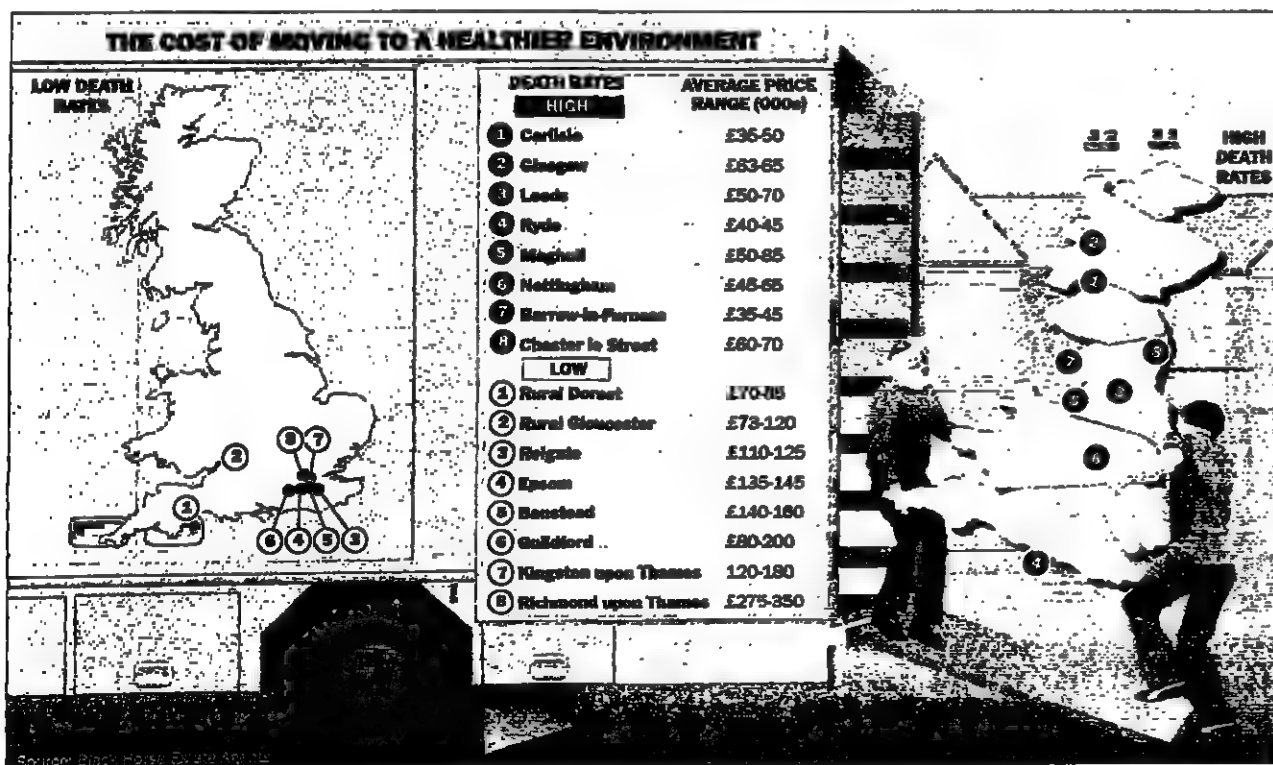
"Since the 1980s, the standard has shot up. We use the best marble in the bathrooms, and the house is often wired for music in every room. Wardrobes have to be lined with sycamore and kitchens must be luxurious and have every imaginable appliance."

At the top end of the market, foreign clients often buy the entire contents of the show flat, from settees to cutlery, because they do not want the inconvenience of furnishing and equipping a London base themselves.

The usual practice with show homes is to exchange contracts but put completion off for some months while the other homes are being sold. As yet no developer appears to have a requirement for a show family.



Jane Rodney chose a Mid-European look for Fountain House



A new North-South divide

Eve-Ann Prentice reports on links between housing and mortality

WHERE you live in Britain may affect how long you live, a report out last month indicates. So how much does it cost to live in areas where you can expect to live longer? Evidence of a widening North-South divide in life expectancy and in property prices emerges in two sets of figures published this summer.

Glasgow residents are 60 per cent more likely to die prematurely than people living in rural Dorset, and 31 per cent more likely than those living in Bristol, according to a study published by the Rowntree Foundation. Residents of Oldham, Salford and Greenock are almost 33 per cent more likely to die before they are 65 than the national average, it adds.

A survey of house prices in Britain, published just before the Rowntree report, shows that homes in places with the highest life expectancies are the most expensive. Eight times as many boys aged one to four died in Manchester between 1990 and 1992 as died in rural Gloucestershire, the Rowntree survey showed. The average price of a semi-detached house in Manchester is £56,100, compared with £73,363 in Gloucestershire, reveals the Halifax report on national house prices for the

second quarter of this year. Dr Daniel Dorling of the University of Bristol, who compiled the report, *Death in Britain: How Local Mortality Rates have Changed: 1950s to 1990s*, examined statistics for death rates of infants, adolescents and adults by sex throughout England, Scotland and Wales. A baby girl born in Leeds is more than twice as likely to die in the first year of life as one growing up in a town in Dorset. The average price of a semi-detached house in Leeds is £57,450; a similar house in Dorset costs £69,540.

Death rates for baby boys in Halifax and Preston are almost double the national average, the Rowntree Foundation survey shows. The average semi-detached house in Halifax costs £53,150 and in Preston it is £59,900 — both well below the national average of £68,106. Though the Rowntree report shows isolated pockets of high

mortality rates in the South, the majority of higher-than-normal death rates are to be found in the North. No link should be made between house prices and death rates, but the figures show that people wanting to move from a high to low-mortality rate area may not be able to afford to do so.

Among places with the lowest premature and child death rates are Totnes in Devon; Wimborne Dorset; and Reigate and Epsom in Surrey, where, according to the Black Horse estate-agent chain, prices for a three-bedroom semi range from £70,000 to £145,000. Early childhood mortality rates for boys in Dewsbury, west Yorkshire; Bethnal Green, in the East End of London; Manchester and St Helens on Merseyside have doubled since 1981. Dr Dorling found. And there has been an increase in deaths among pre-school girls in Bir-

kenhead, Manchester, and the Isle of Wight. Mortality rates for boys and girls aged five to fourteen increased during the 1980s in Salford, rural Carmarthenshire, St Helens, Nottingham and Bethnal Green.

Dr Dorling says: "This study does not seek to speculate on the reasons why divisions between different parts of the country have become so pronounced. However, it does seem that the trend has occurred too quickly to be explained simply by a changing distribution of wealth, changing causes of death, or as a reflection of past health inequalities. These patterns of varying life chances need to be investigated."

The Halifax survey meanwhile shows that Greater London still tops the national house price league; average semis cost £133,722. Of 62 counties listed, the top ten are all in the South. West Wales — average price £42,482 — comes bottom. As part of the World Health Organisation's Targets for Health, Britain has made a commitment to reduce health inequalities by the year 2000. The report published by the Rowntree Foundation concludes that the mortality differences will make the target extremely difficult to achieve.

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Speedway salutes elder statesman

Tony Hoare meets a brave rider who defied the odds to complete 25 years on the track

Even years ago, Alan Grahame did not dare to imagine that he could extend his speedway career long enough to celebrate 25 years in the saddle. In 1986, Grahame was 32 and an established England international rider when he was told that he had Hodgkin's disease, a form of cancer that attacks the lymph glands.

Despite the severity of his condition, Grahame was determined to fight his way back to fitness. He stopped riding for only six weeks, when the treatment he was receiving meant that his blood had taken too much of a pounding. Grahame, a plucky racer, called on that resource to beat the disease and become one of the sport's elder statesmen.

Tonight, at Craven Park Stadium, where Grahame is No 1 for Hull Vikings, he will celebrate his quarter-century as a speedway rider with a testimonial meeting. Grahame has ridden for seven British League clubs since he started out with Birmingham, his home town club, and admits that the celebrations tonight will be an emotional occasion.

Known as "Big Al", he has enjoyed a highly successful career. He rode as a reserve in the 1984 world championship final and finished second in his younger brother, Andy, in the 1982 British championship. The dark days of 1986 will always mark his career, however. "I thought it would possibly finish me, never mind my career," he said, "but modern medicine is amazing and I have a lot of fighting spirit as well. I came through it."

The cancer was at an advanced stage and Grahame was immediately taken into hospital for the first bout of treatment. To carry on racing through the gruelling sessions of chemotherapy and radiotherapy was a remarkable achievement.



Grahame, whose career appeared to be over 11 years ago, celebrates his silver jubilee in the sport tonight

"I had to dig down very deep and find my will to live," Grahame said. "I had to fight it all the way and not give in. I tried to ride through it. Some people said I was stupid and should have had a break from it, but it was my living and I was going to try to ride whatever."

He returned to Cradley in 1987, his testimonial season, but it all became too much for him and he had to be rested from the team. Grahame rode in his benefit meeting and was such a success he was immediately reinstated.

After slowly fighting his way back to form and beating the disease, Grahame

completed his comeback by playing a starring role in Cradley's 1998 Speedway Star Cup victory. Cradley, having won the competition for the third year in succession, were given the trophy permanently. It was immediately handed to Grahame to keep.

"I will never forget that for as long as I live," he said, "I was on cloud nine. It was a relief to be back. I'd had a couple of lean years and it was so nice to be feeling good again."

The trophy now sits in the lounge of Grahame's home in Sutton Coldfield, where his daughter keeps it polished. As

he prepares to celebrate his silver jubilee, it serves as a reminder of the lows that he went through.

Even now, Grahame, who also runs a motorcycle shop near his home, has been fighting pain to take his place in his testimonial. A troublesome shoulder injury was recently operated on, but he insists that he will be riding.

"For the past ten years people have always been asking when I am going to retire," he said. "I always say: 'In a couple of years, just a couple of years.' Here I am now getting ready for 25 years. It has come around quite quickly really."

Sumptuous sporting spectacle enriched by the Gazza Factor

Golf — stop me if I've said this before — does not stir my blood. But when Severiano Ballesteros is around, I am inclined to take notice. Dito Tiger Woods. So much so that I might even switch on the television to watch the Ryder Cup this week, thereby swelling the ranks of the floating voters of sport, caught, not by history and tradition and the prospect of a good old sporting scrap, but by personality. Personality is what television does best. It

And in Italy in 1990, Gazza — we need not bother with his name, need we? — caught the imagination of the floating voters of sport by his wonderfully inventive football, and his famous bout of tears. Thus football burst the banks of its usual stream of popularity. Football became fashionable again: and perhaps a good deal of its present extraordinary popularity goes back to the tears of Turin.

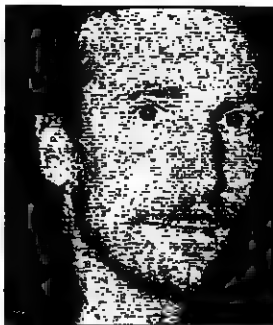
The Gazza Factor need not happen in mainstream sport. It happened in the charmingly daft sport of ice dance: who will forget T and D? They became national icons. The definition of an intellectual is a person who can listen to *Bohème* without seeing a mauve-clad couple slithering about the ice.

Frank Bruno became a national love object, despite the fact that he was involved in the unlovely business of boxing. His act grew pretty stale, but the genuine charm behind it did not. I don't know how many of Bruno's floating voters actually watched his fights — that would have rather spoilt things — but Frank himself rode the Gazza Factor for all that it was worth.

Patriotism is often an aspect of the Gazza Factor — Ian Botham certainly conformed to that one in his time — but it is not essential. Perhaps more than any other sporting icon, Olga Korbut possessed the Gazza Factor in overabundance. Before the Olympics of 1972, gymnastics was a sport that was considered worthy rather than sexy. But Olga transformed it from top to bottom, and her legacy remains. Gymnastics attracted the biggest audience of the entire Games in Atlanta. She — rather like Frankie — possessed an incandescent delight in what she did. She was, in a word, adored.

Genius alone does not make for the Gazza Factor, nor achievement at the very highest level. Pete Sampras, Steve Redgrave, both wonderful athletes, do not possess it. The Gazza Factor is something strange and capricious and delightful. It cannot be contrived — though Bruno did his best — and it cannot be controlled. Any sport that has a Gazza must revel in it, and hope that the effect lasts. As for spectators... well, we can just lie back and enjoy it. At the weekend, football and the rest take second place to golf and racing, and the reason is the Gazza Factor.

SIMON BARNES



Midweek View

RUGBY LEAGUE: SHEFFIELD CAPTAIN ONE OF FIVE PLAYERS ADDED TO SQUAD FOR AUSTRALIA SERIES

Britain plump for consistency of Broadbent

By CHRISTOPHER IRVINE

THERE are few more loyal, consistent or respected players than Paul Broadbent. The Sheffield Eagles captain, a late arrival on the international scene, is certain to add to his five Great Britain appearances in the British Gas series against Australia in November.

Broadbent, 29, is one of five additions to the Britain "train-on" squad, which will

be completed after the Stones Premiership final between Wigan and St Helens, at Old Trafford on Sunday. He is joined by his club colleagues, Nick Pinkney and Keith Senior, and by Dean Sampson and Jason Flowers, both of Castleford.

Belated recognition of Broadbent as one of the few consistently outstanding prop forwards came when he was selected 11 months ago for the South Pacific and New Zealand tour. This year his form was

recognised with selection in the 1997 Stones Dream Team.

Broadbent is more assured of a place in the team at Wembley, on November 1, than Senior, who made two appearances on tour last year, and Pinkney, who represented England in the 1995 World Cup.

Sampson is another experienced contender for the front row, while the selection of Flowers, whose last represen-

tative call was in 1994 for the Great Britain Academy team, recognises his progress at full back for Castleford.

SQUAD: Backs: P. Atkinson (Oldham), S. Bailey (Sheff), G. Broadbent (Sheff), F. Curran (Leeds), C. Dwyer (Sheff), S. Edwards (Leeds), J. Flowers (Sheff), J. Harris (Leeds), N. McEvoy (Sheff), S. Newell (Sheff), J. Scahill (Sheff), K. Senior (Sheff), S. Spruce (Sheff), P. Sterling (Leeds), F. Stewart (Sheff), P. Broadbent (Sheff), A. Farrell (Sheff), M. Forshaw (Sheff), C. Gilpin (Sheff), S. McDermott (Sheff), S. McManus (Sheff), A. Morley (Leeds), T. Newton (Leeds), P. Rowley (Sheff), D. Sampson (Sheff), S. Scudgell (Sheff).

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FOOTBALL

Wenger forced on to the defensive

BY OLIVER HOLT, FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

IN THE end, Arsène Wenger saw the funny side. The most contemplative and professorial of managers, he had spent the best part of an hour trying to account for the continuing disciplinary problems of his Arsenal team, trying to explain the paradox inherent in his propagation of the beautiful game and the strong-arm tactics of his players.

When it was suggested that the controversy caused by the build-up of cautions — Arsenal players have been shown the yellow card 18 times already this season — might mar the occasion of the end of his first year in charge at Highbury early next month, his face creased into a smile. "You could count the bookings and we will put the same number of candles on a cake for my anniversary," Wenger said.

The issue of Arsenal's ill-discipline had been brought to the fore again in the aftermath of their stormy win over Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on Sunday. Frank Leboeuf, sent off after fouling Dennis Bergkamp, was reported yesterday to have said that Arsenal, who came bottom of the fair play league last season with 82 bookings and five sendings-off, were the dirtiest side in English football.

Arsenal will go to the top of the FA Carling Premiership if

they beat West Ham United at Highbury tonight and Manchester United lose to Chelsea at Old Trafford, but their success has been clouded by the threat of imminent suspension hanging over Bergkamp and Steve Bould, who have each incurred four bookings, and when the team returned from training yesterday, Wenger was forced into a wider defence of his football principles.

"I enjoy it when we play

Ryan Giggs could return to the Manchester United starting line-up for the visit of Chelsea to Old Trafford tonight. "There won't be many changes, but my main decision is whether to use Giggs from the start or from the bench," Alex Ferguson, the United manager, said.

good football," Wenger said, "but that means running quickly, jumping high and, of course, putting your foot in. I do not like players who do not get involved in the fight, I concede that, but I never tell anybody to kick an opponent. Never."

"I know how I want my team to play and I know the criticism of them for being too dirty is not right. It does not

really concern me. I do not lose a moment of sleep over it. When you have 40,000 people in a stadium, you have to accept that some people will not like the way you play.

"It is part of being professional that you have to master yourself and your emotions, and we have to avoid getting yellow cards for dissent. But part of the problem is that against Arsenal, everybody is up for it. If you play a physical match in football, you have to fight."

"Of course, I would feel very bad if we finished bottom of the fair play league again this season. Perhaps we should analyse all the yellow cards we get and see whether we should change our game. I am really thinking of doing it because I cannot explain where we get all these yellow cards from."

"People are even saying that Dennis is a dirty player now, but nobody could convince me of that. I think he is the best player in the Premiership at the moment and if I was not the manager here, I would pay money to watch him play. I think everyone accepts that we are trying to play good football."

That is as maybe, but the people who bake the cakes at Highbury will have to make one big enough for an awful lot of candles.

Russell Kempson on the goalkeeper who graduated from market gardening to St James' Park

Five years ago, Shay Given could be found on the outskirts of Lifford, Co Donegal, helping out in the family market gardening business. No matter that he was a promising young footballer, attracting the attention of several leading clubs across the water, there was work to be done. He would fall to his knees amid the acres of vegetables and begin weeding.

Times have changed. Given, 21, no longer gathers potatoes with his four brothers and three sisters. He now contemplates richer pickings in the FA Carling Premiership and European Cup Champions' League as the Newcastle United goalkeeper and, if Ireland can negotiate a play-off, perhaps a place in the World Cup finals.

"Everything has happened so quickly," he said, "and it keeps getting better. I'm still pinching myself. It's a big season for me, my biggest yet, and I just hope I can stay in the first team and maybe win something for the fans."

Since joining Newcastle from Blackburn Rovers during the summer for £15 million — the fee, decided by a tribunal, was a snip — Given has confidently seen off the challenges of Shaka Hislop



Given is now established as the No 1 with Newcastle United and Ireland

and Pavel Srnicek, the club's resident goalkeepers. Though relatively short for his trade, at 5'6", his self-assurance, positioning and agility more than compensated for his lack of height. Barcelona discovered as much when they launched a fierce, late rally in their 3-2 Champions' League defeat on Tyneside last week. West Ham United could find no way past him in Newcastle's 1-0 victory on Saturday and Everton could suffer similar frustration at St James' Park

tonight. In Given's fledgling career, he has kept 19 clean sheets in 28 league matches. At 14, though, he was undecided about his sporting future. He played centre forward at school and also indulged in the dubious delights of Gaelic football. Seamus, his father, suggested that goalkeeping might be his forte and, at 15, he graduated into the local Donegal League with Lifford Celtic's men's side. "The lads were grand, they looked after me," he said.

"They made sure nothing happened to me."

Given still looks as though he needs looking after. His fresh-faced grin radiates innocence and he talks in a shy, warm Irish brogue. Manchester United gave him a trial but, again on the advice of his father, he left Celtic of Lifford for Celtic of Glasgow. The Irish connection — Liam Brady was manager, Patrick Bonner the first-team goalkeeper — also tipped the balance away from Old Trafford.

"Packie was my hero," Given said. "I'd always looked up to him."

Though he progressed swiftly to the brink of the senior side, life at Celtic Park was initially fearful. "The first six months were the worst," he said. "Coming from the country and moving to a city the size of Glasgow was very strange. I missed home a lot."

"I sometimes felt like packing it in and going back to Ireland. I suppose all young lads go through it, but I gradually sorted myself out."

He did eventually go home, for two months, when his contract ended and the new deal offered by Lou Macari, Brady's successor, did not meet his approval. The three-year offer from Kenny Dalglish, the Blackburn manager, proved more acceptable and he again set off across the Irish Sea.

From playing in Rovers' A team and reserves, Given was loaned out to gain experience. Twelve shut-outs in 17 appearances for Sunderland helped them to win the Nationwide League first division title last year, for which he collected a championship medal, yet on his return to Ewood Park he could find no way past the consistent Tim Flowers. "I expected it at first but it then got very frustrating," he said. "I got offered another contract but I didn't want to sign. I just wanted to play." Times have changed. The family business is now a golf driving range and Given need no longer scrape his knees in the potato patch. The wedding can wait.

THE LEADING 100 ENTRIES IN THE TIMES INTERACTIVE TEAM CRICKET GAME



IN ASSOCIATION WITH



Pos	Team (player's name)	Pts	Pos	Team (player's name)	Pts	Pos	Team (player's name)	Pts	Pos	Team (player's name)	Pts
1	Mow And Go (N. Johns)	30024	26	Wells Fargo (B. Howell)	28221	51	Edward Ross (A. Luckhurst)	27684	76	Lamar Old Boys (P. Threlker)	27423
2	M. L. S. (M. Johns)	29982	27	W. L. S. (M. Johns)	28212	52	Orchard M. T. (N. Johns)	27383	77	These Old Boys (P. Threlker)	27387
3	Orchard M. T. (N. Johns)	29436	28	W. L. S. (M. Johns)	28157	53	(J. Coward)	27384	78	National Power (G. Chidley)	27390
4	The Funky Monkeys (A. Moss)	29308	29	Carroll's Fizz (J. Eason)	28171	54	Ashes Coming Home (J. Stewart)	27383	79	Capricorn (P. Stewart)	27390
5	Dennis Dymond (M. Stappert)	29278	30	These Lads (P. Johnson)	28126	55	All Round Ability (M. Stewart)	27375	80	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	27385
6	Dennis Dymond (M. Stappert)	29278	31	Santa's Men (J. G. Simpson)	28088	56	Dennis Dymond (M. Stappert)	27375	81	The Band Played On (M. Reed)	27371
7	Old Wingerlons (J. Hillman)	29161	32	The Sunshine Band (J. Shepherd)	28072	57	Harlow Blues (B. A. Vasa)	27368	82	Cheshire S. H. (M. Roberts)	27380
8	Kelly's Corkers (A. Kelly)	29051	33	Barclay Boys (M. Woodley)	28056	58	The Nugs (D. Brown)	27316	83	Ed's 11 (G. Angell)	27356
9	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	28975	34	Fantasy Farm (J. G. Simpson)	28051	59	Suburban Pk. (C. Wainwright)	27316	84	Meg's Seven (S. Samuels)	27341
10	The Twine (G. Collinson)	28974	35	The Runners (D. Tait)	27974	60	Fantasy Farm (J. G. Simpson)	27316	85	Ace All Rounders (A. Eadie)	27338
11	Wanderlust House 3 (P. O'Brien)	28941	36	Injury Free X1 (J. Hunt)	27965	61	Tennent's (J. Eason)	27316	86	Linnhead (R. Hoy)	27336
12	Santa's Men (J. G. Simpson)	28919	37	Teddy's (B. Baily)	27947	62	Mow And Go (N. Johns)	27309	87	Wells Fargo (B. Howell)	27336
13	Hunt's Cuck (H. Jackson)	28913	38	Spoke Thomas (J. Eason)	27940	63	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	27309	88	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	27336
14	Coleraine Bats (G. Blackburn)	28838	39	Perseus (H. O. Pettman)	27884	64	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	27309	89	Fred's Trainers 3 (J. D. Wainwright)	27336
15	Rob's Barry Army (R. Anderson)	28855	40	Barclay Boys (M. Woodley)	27824	65	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	27309	90	Tobias (A. Luckhurst)	27296
16	Barclay Boys (M. Woodley)	28829	41	Philosophy (P. Johnson)	27815	66	All Round Ability (M. Stewart)	27309	91	Four Ten Batters (P. Johnson)	27296
17	Philosophy (P. Johnson)	28829	42	Road Race (P. Johnson)	27814	67	J. S. W. C. 256 (J. Swales)	27309	92	All Rounders X1 (N. Pemberton)	27273
18	Nine Ten Batters (P. Johnson)	28841	43	Alta Angels (A. Kelly)	27793	68	Lagomartine (C. Hume)	27310	93	Cats Eyes (N. Marchant)	27238
19	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	28843	44	Kim's Bats (D. Gengelly)	27756	69	Caroline A. (A. Luckhurst)	27309	94	Chack Yonkers (M. Hopton)	27238
20	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	28843	45	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	27756	70	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	27309	95	Chack Yonkers (M. Hopton)	27238
21	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	28843	46	Tobias (A. Luckhurst)	27756	71	R. C. A. (J. Swales)	27309	96	Baby Spice (J. Hunt)	27238
22	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	28843	47	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	27756	72	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	27309	97	Edie Woe (A. Luckhurst)	27212
23	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	28843	48	Hunt's Cuck (H. Jackson)	27756	73	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	27309	98	Chack Yonkers (M. Hopton)	27212
24	The 1887 X1 (M. Johns)	28829	49	Wesley Wainwright (J. D. Wainwright)	27756	74	D. J. S. (D. Fenton)	27309	99	The Stumpers (J. Eason)	27206
25	DAISY MAY (P. Coward)	28823	50	14 Lads (P. Johnson)	27711	75	The Sad Team (J. Swales)	27309	100	The Lost Cause (J. Andrews)	27186

INTERACTIVE TEAM CRICKET SCOREBOARD

The scores in the first four columns cover the past week; the final column is the players' overall points total. The figures include all matches completed by September 21. Overseas players are shown in bold type. Rising Stars in <i>italics</i> .									
Player (no)	Runs	Wkts	CS%	Bonus Weekly	Overall				
Batsmen (001-148)									
Category A									
C. J. Adams (001)	0	0	0	0	1820				
T. J. Archer (002)	0	0	0	0	1155				
M. A. Atkinson (003)	0	0	0	0	97				
C. W. J. Ayres (004)	0	0	0	0	1204				
R. J. Bailey (005)	0	0	0	0	2457				
R. J. Bailey (006)	0	0	0	0	265				
R. J. Bailey (007)	0	0	0	0	100				
G. B. Baines (008)	0	0	0	0	1854				
G. B. Baines (009)	0	0	0	0	100				
G. B. Baines (010)	0	0	0	0	131				
A. B. Brown (011)	0	0	0	0	1769				
M. A. Burch (012)	0	0	0	0	245				
P. C. C. (013)	0	0	0	0	13				
J. P. Curran (014)	0	0	0	0	112				
M. T. G. (015)	0	0	0	0	277				
M. T. G. (016)	0	0	0	0	1192				
N. F. Farbringer (017)	0	0	0	0	148				
J. E. R. (018)	0	0	0	0	1887				
M. W. G. (019)	0	0	0	0	61				
G. A. G. (020)	0	0	0	0	582				
M. L. Hayden (021)	0	0	0	0	127				
D. J. H. (022)	0	0	0	0	114				
G. A. H. (023)	0	0	0	0	331				
A. J. Hollister (024)	0	0	0	0	114				
N. Houson (025)	0	0	0	0	57				
S. P. James (026)	0	0	0	0	354				
D. J. Jones (027)	0	0	0	0	32				
H. J. Knott (028)	0	0	0	0	91				
M. L. L. (029)	0	0	0	0	1476				
G. D. Lloyd (030)	0	0	0	0	628				
M. P. L. (031)	0	0	0	0	127				
A. J. Macdonald (032)	0	0	0	0	103				
R. J. Montgomery (033)	0	0	0	0	103				
M. J. Moody (034)	0	0	0	0	103				
H. Morris (035)	0	0	0	0	103				
M. D. M. (036)	0	0	0	0	103				
T. L. Penney (037)	0	0	0	0	103				
M. R. R. (038)	0	0	0	0	103				
P. V. Simmonds (039)	0	0	0	0	103				
G. R. S. (040)	0	0	0	0	103				
B. Smith (041)	0	0	0	0	103				
A. Smith (042)	0	0	0	0	103				
A. J. Stewart (043)	0	0	0	0	103				
M. A. Taylor (044)	0	0	0	0	103				
G. P. Thorpe (045)	0	0	0	0	103				
G. P. Thorpe (046)	0	0	0	0	103				
T. Ward (047)	0	0	0	0	103				
M. E. Waugh (048)	0	0	0	0	103				
S. R. Waugh (049)	0	0	0	0	103				
A. P. Wells (050)	0	0	0	0	103				
W. P. Wells (051)	0	0	0	0	103				
J. Whitaker (052)	0	0	0	0	103				
Category B									
D. A. Benson (053)	0	0	0	0	0				
D. B. B. (054)	0	0	0	0	0				
M. E. C. (055)	0	0	0	0	0				
R. J. C. (056)	0	0	0	0	0				
T. S. C. (057)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. Dale (058)	0	0	0	0	0				
J. A. Dale (059)	0	0	0	0	0				
R. J. D. (060)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (061)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (062)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (063)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (064)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (065)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (066)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (067)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (068)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (069)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (070)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (071)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (072)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (073)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (074)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (075)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (076)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (077)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (078)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (079)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (080)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (081)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (082)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (083)	0	0	0	0	0				
A. J. Evans (084)	0	0	0	0	0				
All-rounders (149-185)									
M. W. A. (149)	0	0	0	0	118				
D. J. A. (150)	0	0	0	0	118				
M. G. B. (151)	0	0	0	0	118				
D. J. A. (152)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. D. C. (153)	0	0	0	0	118				
R. D. B. (154)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (155)	0	0	0	0	118				
C. D. D. (156)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (157)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (158)	0	0	0	0	118				
S. C. S. (159)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (160)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (161)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (162)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (163)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (164)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (165)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (166)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (167)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (168)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (169)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (170)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (171)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (172)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (173)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (174)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (175)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (176)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (177)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (178)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (179)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (180)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (181)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (182)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (183)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (184)	0	0	0	0	118				
P. A. J. (185)	0	0	0	0	118				
Wicketkeepers (186-216)									
A. J. Ayres (186)	0	0	0	0	38				
R. J. Bailey (187)	0	0	0	0	259				
R. J. Bailey (188)	0	0	0	0	145				
R. J. Bailey (189)	0	0	0	0	114				
M. B. B. (190)	0	0	0	0	46				
C. A. Chapman (191)	0	0	0	0	1600				
D. Dawson (192)	0	0	0	0	90				
T. Frost (193)	0	0	0	0	905				
S. P. G. (194)	0	0	0	0	30				
T. H. Healy (195)	0	0	0	0	2193				
N. H. Hoag (196)	0	0	0	0	52				
B. J. H. (197)	0	0	0	0	20				
D. A. H. (198)	0	0	0	0	82				
R. J. H. (199)	0	0	0	0	85				
G. G. L. (200)	0	0	0	0	136				
A. Marsh (201)	0	0	0	0	60				
C. P. M. (202)	0	0	0	0	80				
C. P. M. (203)	0	0	0	0	17				
P. A. M. (204)	0	0	0	0	100				
M. W. M. (205)	0	0	0	0	26				
K. J. N. (206)	0	0	0	0	26				
R. J. P. (207)	0	0	0	0	171				
R. J. P. (208)	0	0	0	0	176				
R. J. P. (209)	0	0	0	0	1039				
R. J. P. (210)	0	0	0	0	121				
A. D. S. (211)	0	0	0	0	3				
R. C. S. (212)	0	0	0	0	121				
D. G. S. (213)	0	0	0	0	12				
R. J. T. (214)	0	0	0	0	78				
R. J. T. (215)	0	0	0	0	2686				
R. J. T. (216)	0	0	0	0	1284				
R. J. T. (217)	0	0	0	0	1159				
R. J. T. (218)	0	0	0	0	30				
Bowlers (217-347)									
Category A									
A. J. A. (217)	0	0	0	0	159				
S. J. W. (218)	0	0	0	0	108				
M. C. J. (219)	0	0	0	0	108				
R. T. B. (220)	0	0	0	0	659				
R. T. B. (221)	0	0	0	0	30				
M. S. S. (222)	0	0	0	0	165				
A. B. S. (223)	0	0	0	0	1043				
M. P. S. (224)	0	0	0	0	727				
A. B. S. (225)	0	0	0	0	10				
M. S. S. (226)	0	0	0	0	1068				
S. J. S. (227)	0	0	0	0	152				
R. C. S. (228)	0	0	0	0	87				
G. S. S. (229)	0	0	0	0	98				
C. S. S. (230)	0	0	0	0	144				
C. S. S. (231)	0	0	0	0	163				
D. S. S. (232)	0	0	0	0	272				
A. P. S. (233)	0	0	0	0	130				
A. P. S. (234)	0	0	0	0	43				
A. P. S. (235)	0	0	0	0	235				
A. P. S. (236)	0	0	0	0	1102				
A. P. S. (237)	0	0	0	0	50				
A. P. S. (238)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (239)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (240)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (241)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (242)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (243)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (244)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (245)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (246)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (247)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (248)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (249)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (250)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (251)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (252)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (253)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (254)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (255)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (256)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (257)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (258)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (259)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (260)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (261)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (262)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (263)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (264)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (265)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (266)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (267)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (268)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (269)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (270)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (271)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (272)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (273)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (274)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (275)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (276)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (277)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (278)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (279)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (280)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (281)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (282)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (283)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (284)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (285)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (286)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (287)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (288)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (289)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (290)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (291)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (292)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (293)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (294)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (295)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (296)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (297)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (298)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (299)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (300)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (301)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (302)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (303)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (304)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (305)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (306)	0	0	0	0	135				
A. P. S. (307)	0	0	0	0	135				
A.									

United Europe seek all-important bonding agent

Seve tries to create that loving feeling

It's a team thing, the Ryder Cup. They keep telling us how special and emotional it is, and I believe them. But for the five hours it took for the practising players to complete the 18 holes here yesterday, it became rather exhausting scanning the body language for that special Ryder Cup "I love you-Nick (sniff)", "I love you-Colin" stuff that we are being geared up to expect.

Some really fab golf would have been a nice substitute, while the New Man feelings bubble and stew in anticipation of the weekend — but since this was the first practice day (with two more to go before competition starts), fab golf was understandably being kept in reserve.

It was an odd day, low-key but interesting, warm and windy with the longest queue for a bottle of pop I've seen at a sporting event. Punters in tailored shorts happily roamed the place; all nationalities, it seems, favour the tailored short. Anyway, flushed with my own experience of playing here just a few weeks ago, I followed the third four-ball of Europeans round the course — Lee Westwood with Ian Woosnam; Thomas Bjorn with Bernhard Langer — and sent out as many encouraging "I love you-Thom", "I love you-Bernhard" vibes as I could manage.

Seve keeps saying that the more experienced players should help the rookies, and I felt I should tell them all that I knew about Valderrama. For example, steer clear of the trees! Keep out of the rough! Put uphill if possible, but remember some of the uphill is really cunningly deceptive downhill! All these points may seem self-evident, but on the other hand, perhaps they cannot be repeated too often.

For, let's face it, nobody's perfect. On the 2nd yesterday, against all conventional wisdom ("Shape your drive with a shade of draw," advises Valderrama: *The First Ten Years*), Bjorn's tee-shot found him slap-bang behind the cork tree in the middle of the fairway. Oops. On the third, Woosnam misjudged the spongy nature of the deathly rough (it has some of the qualities of anti-matter), and found himself executing

LYNNE TRUSS



At Valderrama

hope brigade. Those straight, strong 250-yard tee-shots cruelly deprive them of the chance to perform "snake-killer" of the Serengeti impersonations in the long grass. Of my chosen four-ball, only Ian Woosnam — in a calamitous outward nine — consistently made the effort to test the course to its limits, by obstinately missing all the fairways, like a child insisting on eating off the table next to the plate, or sitting on the floor when there's a chair.

Mercifully, things improved for him. But for a while, most of Woosnam's shots were greeted, not by the usual congratulatory *Jawohl* or *¡Ole!* but by shrieks from hastily bent heads.

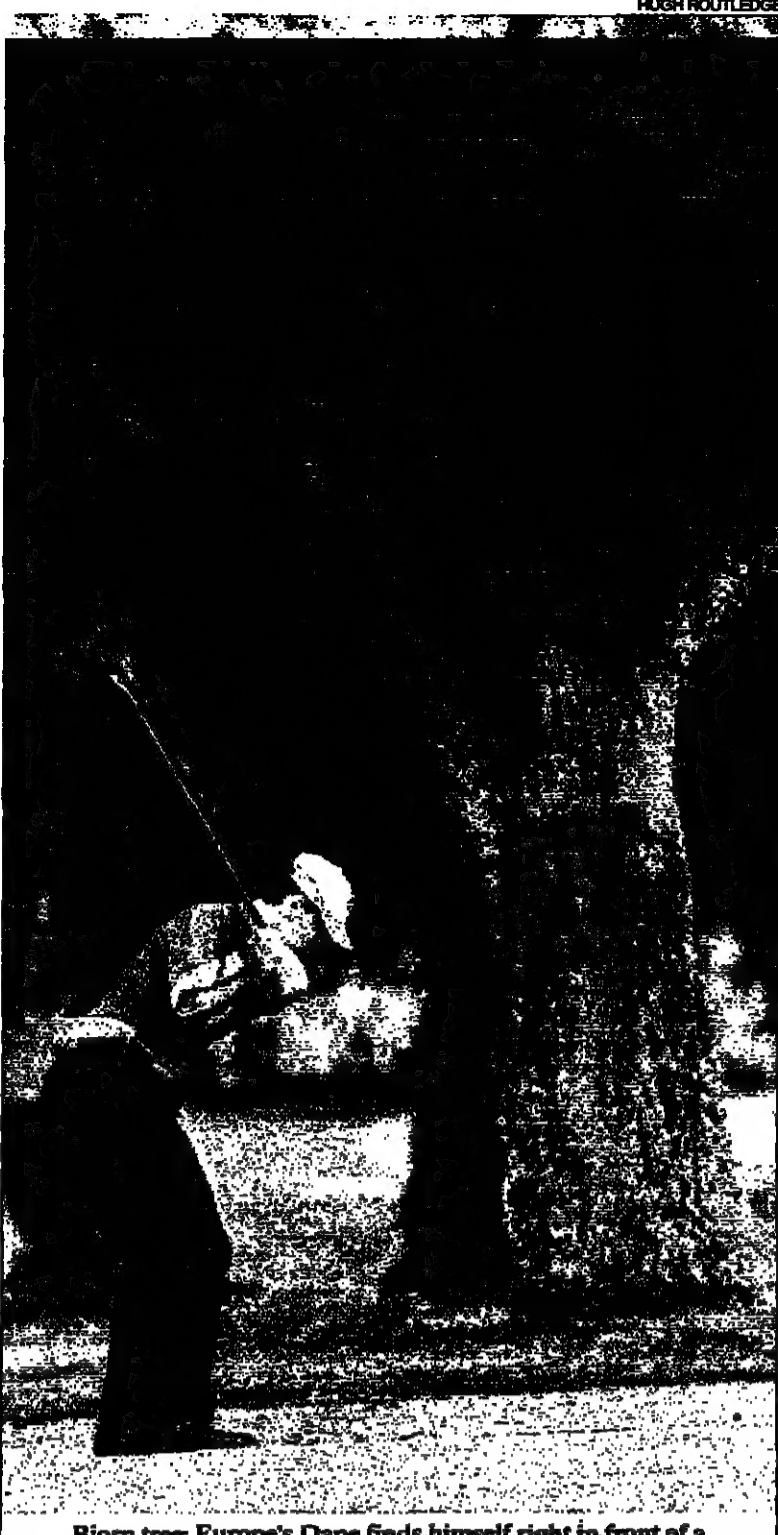
Having previous knowledge of a famous course was a strange feeling. What happened to all the bunkers, then? Where did all these ropes and holes and Carver nick-nacks come from? As the players made short work of the par three 6th, it was pleasant to reflect that on this lovely fairway I recently remembered the existence of the follow-through (an inspiration), and improved my swing 100 per cent.

As they assaulted the big par five waterfall hole (the 4th) I remembered how — heeding the advice of a well-weathered Valderrama member — I simply skipped both 4 and 5, and didn't tell anyone.

Were these guys playing to win, or to learn, or to test tactics, or to bond? I was surprised, at the end, to learn they had been scoring their match, with Langer and Bjorn formally winning 2-1. Many of the holes ended in a rather casual near-as-dammit putt

one of those terrible chip-shots the rest of us do — the shot in which the ball is confidently struck, with full follow-through, yet just hops six inches, and stops. I love you, Ian. I just wish you wouldn't smoke, that's all. But I love you and I wish I'd warned you about the rough.

There is, of course, a problem applying my own experience to those of the players because these blokes tend not to end up in the same positions on the course as the no-



Bjorn and Seve: Europe's Dane finds himself right in front of a huge barrier — a cork tree — on the 2nd fairway yesterday

"That'll do", that encouraged me to think that it wasn't too serious. But, of course, it was. At the same time as these chaps are finding their feet on the course, they are proving their worth to their leader, Seve, who will pick from them later in the week. "We don't play for Seve; we play for Europe," Constantino Rocca said yesterday. Which sounded convincing, except that it's not Europe that might leave you out of the foursomes.

That famous Ryder Cup feeling is definitely on its way, but yesterday it was only the Little Touch of Seve

moments that kindled it. What a man. Suddenly his personal buggy would appear, emblazoned with "Captain European", and a lovely vision of tanned, concerned Spaniards (with an earpiece) would descend to show his troops the way.

Finding Woosnam in a dense thicket at the 8th, Seve talked him through the shot, made gestures with the heel of his hand, stood back, and was then nearly brained by the hilarious whizz-crack ricochet that inevitably resulted. A lot of bonding went on in that moment, you could tell.

EQUESTRIANISM: WEMBLEY GALA FIGHTS FOR SURVIVAL AFTER HEAVY FINANCIAL LOSSES

Riders insist that the show must go on

By JENNY MACARTHUR

THIS is make or break time for the Horse of the Year Show, which gets under way with the national grade C showjumping championship at Wembley Arena today. Founded in 1949, the show — which 20 years ago was watched by 50,000 in the arena and more than six million nightly on television — is fighting for survival. Loss of television coverage and key sponsors have taken their toll and three revamps in as many years have failed to halt the decline.

The show might have ended in June — after Wembley

sacked the management firm, EPS (HOYS) Ltd — had not Grandstand Media, a firm already involved with the show, decided to take up the reins. Neither Grandstand Media nor Wembley, who took out a seven-year lease on the show from the British Show Jumping Association in 1993, underestimate the task. Paul Streeter, the director of Wembley Arena, said: "We obviously can't continue to run shows at a loss."

Mark Wein, a director of Grandstand Media, who has found sponsors for most of the events this week, though not the grand prize, is realistic in his aims. "We've set out to

break even," he said. "The show costs £1 million to stage and, thanks to one or two individuals putting in a substantial amount, the show is going ahead. We accepted that, at this late stage, we could not make changes to the schedule or prize-money, but we have made other cost savings."

The show's future depends on rekindling the heady atmosphere of the Seventies and early Eighties, when riders and spectators alike thrilled to Wembley's special magic. In the words of David Broom, who first competed in 1951: "It was the grand finale of the summer season — an end-of-

term show which brought together all the fanatics of the horse world because there was something for everyone." John Whitaker, who competes in his 26th Wembley show this week, against his fellow Great Britain team members, Robert Smith, Geoff Billington and Michael Whitaker, said: "It would be terrible to lose it. It was watching the show on television as a boy which inspired me to go into the sport. It was like magic when I first rode there."

John Whitaker and Billington carry heavy burdens this week. In addition to competing, they are leading the entertainment side of the show with daily performances of their "Simply The Best" display. Their act, a hilarious guide to teaching yourself to jump — featuring the great horse, Milton — looks sure to be one of the highlights.

Billington's horse, It's Otto, will be another. Last year, the Dutch-bred gelding, on which Billington came sixth in the Olympic Games in Atlanta, missed Wembley to compete at the richer Bremen Show, in Germany. Billington arrives at Wembley £60,000 richer after his second place in the grand prix in Calgary ten days ago — and will ride It's Otto in the grand prix on Sunday night and either the Daewoo Championship or the Martin Collins leading showjumper on Saturday.

Other leading showjumper competing for a share in the £122,000 prize-money fund include Nick Skelton, Tim Stockdale and James Fisher. With a full range of showing classes, and displays such as the Spillers Pony Club Mounted Games, the Musical Drive of the Heavy Horses and a dressage pas de deux, the organisers hope that the show's variety will prove to be a winning formula once again.



John Whitaker: dual role

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WORD-WATCHERS

Answers from page 43

HANDSEL

(b) To give handed to (a person). To present with, give, or offer, something auspicious at the commencement of the year or day, the beginning of an enterprise. To present with earnest money or a token in anticipation of an engagement or bargain. From the Old English *handsele* glossed "mansele", giving into the hands of another. "When I was at school, the custom of handsele was the master on Handsele Monday still flourished in Scotland."

JINN

(a) In Mohammedan demonology, an order of spirits lower than the angels, said to have the power of appearing in human and animal forms, and to exercise supernatural influence over men. From the Arabic collective plural for demons, spirits, angels. In Arabic the singular is *jinn*. In English commonly a *jinn*. "The species of jinn is said to have been created some thousands of years before Adam."

HICKSITE

(a) A member of a seceding body of American Quakers, founded by Elias Hicks in 1827, and holding Socinian doctrines. "A few spectators, mostly of the Hicksite division of Friends, were present, in broad brims and plain bonnets."

HASARD

(a) Grey-haired or hoary. A man with grey hair. Scottish from Old English *hasu*, *hasve* grey, ash-coloured. "Overcast with hasart bayr and faynt dotage."

SOLUTION TO WINNING CHESS MOVE

1 Qh1 Rg8 (Black can try 1... Qd6+ or 1... Qe1 but they don't disturb White's idea) 2 Qd7+! Kd7 3 Rb5 checkmate

TELEVISION CHOICE

The penguins are coming!

Animal People: A Penguin in the House
BBC1, 7.00pm

Peter Sallis, the narrator, gives a whimsical account of an "invasion" currently taking place in New Zealand. "Something very strange is happening in the suburbs of Wellington," he says darkly — but his mock-menace is contradicted by the sight of just what is "invading". The Little Blue Penguin is encroaching, and for the most part Wellingtonians are putting up with finding whole families nesting in their garages, on their rooftops, even under their sofas. Human beings have urbanised their once deserted beach habitats and the penguins are on the march, or rather scuttle — dodging traffic and getting bandages and anti-stress medication in seaside sanctuaries.



PC Hewett and penguin (BBC1, 7.00pm)

Crime Beat: Drugs War
BBC1, 8.00pm

Martyn Lewis, juggling a kilo of heroin, begins his new series in top form, placing the current position of law enforcers against drugs in sharp perspective. In the six instances chosen it would appear the drugs-busters are winning. Scotland, says a Customs and Excise officer, "is loved by dealers for its remote coastline" but there is tense, murky footage of the customs officers cornering a delivery from Africa and the world-beating statistics of Scottish addicts injected at the rate of ten thousand a day has dropped to 8,500. Sixty-five per cent of burglaries can be blamed on drug-takers, but in Plymouth Lewis finds a "fast track" scheme of rehabilitation rather than prison which seems to be working. In Nottinghamshire schoolchildren are advised by police before the drug culture can reach them and in London the once-notorious King's Cross area has been cleaned up.

Survival Special: Cuddly Sharks
ITV, 8.00pm

First there was *Jaws*, dramatising what we already believed about man-eating sharks. Then there was the backlash... a splash of documentaries insisting that most sharks aren't interested in people and wouldn't dream of spoiling their holidays by eating them. Recently we saw a repeat of David Attenborough's brilliant documentary on the Great White — "an awesome killing machine"

— but far keener on elephant seals than human swimmers and surfers. This equally vivid film looks at the Great White off California and the Tiger Shark off Hawaii and comes to much the same conclusions. But you will still shiver at the recollections of badly scarred surfers who survived attacks and the stomach-churning Tiger Shark raid on a colony of young albatrosses trying to take off from the water for the first time. Fat chance.

The Ebb Tide
ITV, 9.00pm and 10.40pm

Robert Louis Stevenson may have inspired this turn-of-the-century saga of the high seas but he certainly didn't write dialogue like "in your dreams, sunshine", "from where I'm standing" and "you got a problem with that?" If you remember the story from your school days you will recall that it strikes a mystical chord: a plague ship, bodies still on her, drops anchor off a remote Caribbean island where three derelict human beings — Chisholm (Robbie Coltrane, no less), Swanson (Steven Mackintosh) and Bunch (Chris Barnes) — agree to take her on to her destination, Australia, with a mystery cargo. As the ship's men discover what the cargo is they get roaring, nearly kill each other and are eventually storm-tossed on to another tropical island deserted but for an apparent madman named Ellstrom (Nigel Terry). Ellstrom has pearls by the bucketful to bargain for what he wants. Elizabeth Cowley

RADIO CHOICE

A Time To Heal
Radio 2, times vary

Radio 2 has become adept over the past few years at featuring programmes which set out to help people with particular problems, without excluding those who may be interested in the subject but have no direct need of help at a that time. The subject this week is bereavement and there are programmes at various times over the next three days. The main presenter for the season is Patricia Hodge, the actress, and the twin aims are to give the bereaved emotional support of kindred souls and to discuss the practical help and to offer the practical help which most people do not realise they need until a family death actually occurs. There is a free 24-hour helpline on 0800 022 022.

RADIO 1

7.00am Mark Radcliffe 9.00 Simon Mayo 12.00 Jo Whiteley Includes 12.30pm Newsbeat 2.00 Nick Campbell 4.00 Mark Goodier 6.18 Newsbeat 6.30 Evening Session with Steve Lamacq 8.30 Trade Update with Clare McDonnell 8.40 John Peel Includes live session from New Orleans 10.00 Maye Anne Hobbs 1.00am Dave Navon 4.00 Chris Moyles

RADIO 2

A Time To Heal, See Choice
6.00am Sarah Kennedy 7.30 Wake Up to Wogan 8.30 Ken Bruce 11.30 Jimmy Young 1.30pm Debbie Thorne 3.00 Ed Stewart 5.05 John Dunn 7.00 Nick Barnard 8.00 Folk on 2 9.00 The Chistry Moore Story. An insight into the life of the Irish singer-songwriter. With concert from New York. Includes: John Harland and David Lundy 9.30 Talking Corners. Jenny Eccle talks about what makes her laugh (9.30) Steve Wright Picture Show 10.30 Richard Ainsworth 10.50am Steve Madden 1.30 The CMA Awards Live from the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville. Hosted by Vince Gill 4.00 Alan Lester

RADIO 3 LIVE

6.00am The Breakfast Programme 9.00 The Magpie with Brian Hayes 12.00 Midday with Mark 2.00pm Fuscione on Five 4.00 Nickinovich with Nickinovich 7.00 News Extra with Valerie Sanson 7.30 Football Night Live commentary on the Premier Division clash between Nottm Forest and Rangers. Plus reports from the Premiership and news from the second round of the Coca-Cola Cup 10.00 Litograph 11.00 News Extra 12.00am Alan Watts with Paul Martin and Steve McDonnell 2.00am Up All Night with Rhod Sharp 5.00 Morning Reports

TALK RADIO

6.30am Paul Ross and Carol McGiffin 8.00 Scott Chisholm 12.00 Lorraine Kelly 2.00pm Tarnya Boyd 4.00 Driveline with Peter Dinkley 7.00 Anne Raeburn 9.00 James White 1.00am Ian Collins

RADIO 3

6.00am On Air, with Andrew McGregor. Includes Chopin (Polonaise in A flat, Eroica), Mendelssohn (Violin Concerto in E minor); Blber (Battaglia a 10); Beethoven (Piano Sonata in F minor); Wagner (Ride of the Valkyries); Puccini (The Farewell, La Rondine)
9.00 Morning Collection, with Penny Gore. Bach (Brandenburg Concerto No 1 in F); Grieg (Lyric Suite); Debussy (Four Moods); Debussy (Cello Mont-cu-Paris); Bizet (Au Fond du Temple Saint, Pearl Fishery); Korngold (Suite: Much Ado about Nothing)
10.00 Musical Encounters, with Nicola Heywood. Thomas. Includes Mendelssohn (String Symphony No 3 in E minor); Schumann (Gretchen vor dem Wald der Meister Dolorosa, Scene from Goethe's Faust); Durufle (Four Motets); Debussy (Cello Sonata in D minor); Beethoven (Symphony No 2 in B minor); Beethoven (Eroica Variations); Verdi (Tol Oul Sue le Neant des Grandeurs de ce Monde, Don Carlos)
12.00 Composer of the Week: Pizzetti
1.00pm Lunchtime Concert. Live from the Wigmore Hall, London. Noriko Ogawa, piano. Rachmaninov (Prelude, Op 23 No 4 in D); No 5 in G minor; No 6 in E flat; Stravinsky (Mitsukurin) (Night Procession, Sakuragi); Chopin (Piano Sonata No 3 in B minor)
2.00 Midweek Choice, with Susan Sharpe. Telephone 0171-765 4308 with your request
4.00 Choral Evening. Live from Wells Cathedral 5.00 In Tune, with Sean Rafferty. Includes Fairy Tales by Janacek and A Late Lark by Delius

RADIO 4

5.55am Shipping Forecast (LW) 6.00 News Briefing 6.10 Farming Today 6.25 Prayer for the Day 6.30 Today 6.45 A Boy at the Hogarth Press. Jamie Glover reads Richard Kennedy's classic memoir (25) 6.58 Weather
9.00 News 9.05 Midweek, with the Times columnist Libby Davies and guest
10.00 News: The Windy Sea (FM). Tim Whewell continues his exploration of the countries bordering the Caspian Sea (24)
10.10 Daily 5 (LW)
10.15 On This Day
10.30 Women's Hour, introduced by Jenni Murray
11.30 Gardeners' Question Time, with Bob Flowerdew, Nigel Colvill and Geoffrey Smith
12.00 News; You and Yours, with Mark Whitaker
12.25pm Eastern Mitz. Philip Althaus's comedy drama features Hermine Singh Kalra, Kathryn Apperance and Annette Ken (25) 12.58 Weather
1.00 The World at One, with Nick Clarke at the Liberal Democrats' conference and James Cox in London
1.40 The Archers (1) 1.55 Shipping Forecast
2.00 News; The Peggym and the Crawlers, by Catherine Castles. With Spil Windrop, Sheila Donald and Joy Cooper (25)
2.45 News; Letters from Here and There. Deborah Moggach reads a recent tip to Goa (26)
3.00pm The Afternoon Shift, with Dore Graham
4.05 Kaleidoscope. Paul Garsford reviews the new films of the week, including Contact, starring Jodie Foster. Plus a look at rock stars turned actors

CLASSIC FM

6.00am Alan Martin 9.00 Henry Kelly 1.00pm Listener Request Hour 2.00pm Concerto. Salford (Fute and Oboe Concerto) 3.00 Jamie Crick 7.00 Newsnight 7.30 Sonata Devienne (Fute Sonata No 2 in C) 8.00 Evening Concert. J.S. Bach (Tocatta and Paganini in D minor); C.P.E. Bach (The Sonata in B flat); Grieg (Piano Trio No 1); Puccini (D. Saverio); Verdi (Bohème); Bruhn (Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra); 10.00 Michael Mappin 2.00am Concerto (9) 3.00 Mark Griffiths

VIRGIN RADIO

7.00am Russ and Jon's Breakfast Experience 10.00 Graham Dore 1.00pm Jeremy Clark 4.00 Nicky Home 7.00 Nick Abbott 10.00 Mark Forster 2.00am Richard Porter

RADIO 3

7.30 Performance on 3. David Lloyd, Irene Williamson, Ian Fisher and Daniel Edwards, horns, Robert Court, organ, Vale of Glamorgan Youth Choir, Estorlian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, BBC National Orchestra of Wales under Toru Kajitsu. Peters Vaska (Cantabile for String Orchestra); Vello Tomis (The Bishop and the Pagan for Vocal Ensemble); Bronius Kutavicius (Last Pages for Chorus, Organ and Horns); Lomas Pasik (Deo Gratias, Gloria Patri); Arvo Part (Te Deum)
8.55 Postscript. To mark 100 years since the author's birth, Ron Bergles reads Sam Bunting by William Faulkner (35)
9.15 Handel's Organ. Timothy Roberts plays the organ of St Lawrence Whitchurch, Little St Lawrence, an instrument once played by the composer Handel (Concerto in B flat); John Bennett (Voluntary in G minor); Handel (Concerto in G minor); Bennett (Voluntary in F)
10.00 Ensemble. Penny Gore introduces a recital by Lowri Blake, cello, and Iwan Llwyd-Jones, piano. Bach (Solo Cello Suite No 1 in G); Mendelssohn (Cello Sonata No 1 in B flat)
10.45 Night Waves. See Choice
11.30 Composer of the Week: Clementi (1)
12.30 Jazz Notes. Digby Fairweather introduces the Savannah Jazz Band
1.00 Through the Night, with Donald Macleod. Includes 1.00 German Symphony Orchestra under Vladimir Ashkenazy. With Elder Nebelstein, piano. Chopin (Piano Concerto No 1 in E minor); Korngold (Symphony No 1)

RADIO 4

4.45 Short Story: Dying for Love, by Carol Shields. Read by Buffy Davies
5.00 PM 5.50 Shipping Forecast 5.55 Weather 6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 Round Britain Quiz (1)
7.00 News 7.05 The Archers
7.20 Face the Facts, with John White and his team of investigators (28) (1)
7.45 The National Interest. MPs from opposing parties discuss the enormous problem of funding the NHS (22)
8.45 Sleazebag Women. The third of four comedies by Stewart Permut in which four different women give their views of the world (34)
9.00 Action and Reaction. Sue Blackmore chairs a scientific debate at the Old Royal Observatory in Greenwich (25)
9.30 Kaleidoscope (1) 9.58 Weather
10.00 The World Tonight, with Jeremy Harris
10.45 Book at Bedtime: Littering with Intent. Anna Massie reads Muriel Spark's comic novel (31/0)
11.00 On Baby Street. A comedy drama about three new mothers living in the same street, written by Julie Balbo and Jenny Eccle. With Frances Barber and Claire Skinner. (45)
11.30 The Cheese Shop Present. Sketches, songs and jokes (1)
12.00 News 12.30am The Late Book: Light in August, by William Faulkner, abridged by John Hartley and read by Ed Bishop (31/2)
12.45 Shipping Forecast (LW)
1.00 As World Service

FREQUENCY GUIDE. RADIO 1. FM 97.8-99.8. RADIO 2. FM 88.0-90.2. RADIO 3. FM 80.2-92.4. RADIO 4. FM 92.4-95.6. LW 198. MW 720. RADIO 5 LIVE. MW 655, 909. WORLD SERVICE. MW 646; LW 158 (12.45-5.55am); CLASSIC FM. FM 100.1-102. VIRGIN RADIO. FM 105.8; MW 1197, 1215. TALK RADIO. MW 1053, 1058. Television and radio listings compiled by Peter Dear, Ian Hughes, Rosemary Smith, Susan Thomson, Jane Gregory and John McNamara.

Troubles, war or terrorism: take your pick

I remember once, in the 1980s when the Saturday evening television news invariably started with some post-match punch-up or other, reading a sociologically minded piece in one of the papers pointing out that however mean they looked and talked, the various groups of boot-boys weren't entirely serious about their crippling and maiming. If you looked at the statistics, said the theorist, you'd see that hardly anyone was seriously injured let alone killed and that, given that along warfare was taking place in most towns with a first division team most weekends, this must suggest some sort of restraint on the part of the lads.

I admit to the same sort of thought, although less worthily. I'll grant you, a few minutes into the first of the excellent Provos (BBC1). This was, everyone kept reminding us, a war. The Provisional IRA said it was a war and

the British Army said that, although they weren't treating it as a war, they understood in which way the IRA was.

And yet, in getting on for 30 years of warfare, and of warfare set in an age when mass destruction was easier and cheaper than ever before, 1,800 civilians, soldiers and IRA activists had been killed. I hesitate to say "only 1,800" because, among the innocent at least, each one of the number is a loss too great; but still, a war which kills 60 or so a year suggests something other than the total warfare which the IRA has always claimed was its aim.

In the IRA like the football bootboots, the holding back when it comes to the big kick, or the relatively low mortality rate indicative of something else? Ineptitude, for instance?

The fighting we see in Northern Ireland on the news looks like any other urban European fighting:

there have been times when the smoky morning-after haze over Londonderry hasn't been much different from that over bits of Bosnia. But while the news has always taken the government line that this is not to be considered in terms of warfare, *Provos* allowed the IRA its military conceit without necessarily accepting it.

Behind the haze, though, were still are — the men speaking to Peter Taylor's camera, many of them for the first time.

When the episode started, in the late 1980s, the IRA — the "official" IRA as it was soon to become — was a moribund hanger-on from the Troubles of 40 years earlier, a theorising civil rights movement loath to do anything to protect the Londonderry Roman Catholics against the triumphant Protestants in a time when it was easy to see the city as our own Mobile or Montgomery.

REVIEW



John Diamond

As far as the IRA was concerned, said the voiceover: "Protecting Catholics was a sectarian act."

The IRA volunteers of the years to come were then small boys, cheering the British soldiers marching in to do the job of protecting the Catholic majority. Most of them, said one, wanted to become soldiers themselves. Indeed, many of them did for when, a short while later the IRA split

into the pacifist Officials and the war-mongering Provisionals. It was the same boys who joined up.

In the archive footage of the time they are thin-faced, streetwise youths, all Bri-Nylon shirt under cheap fatigues, learning to strip down ancient small arms in grimy kitchens. These were the days when television reporters could film such things and interview Provisional IRA leaders with no suggestion that these were harmless political spokesmen: we saw them answering questions about the self-proclaimed war in a way that, even since the dropping of the proscription against Sinn Féin interviews, we never see now.

Thirty years on, many of them spent in jail for bombing and shooting (and no IRA nostalgia appears without his prosecuted crimes listed in his on-screen caption), they are ruddy-faced, middle-aged and elderly men in patterned woollies and leisure suits,

asserting, with the conservatism of the middle-aged, that sectarian violence isn't what it was.

The reminiscences of the start of the fighting version of the modern IRA were of a distinctly amateur outfit picking up a second weapons where they could, parading like some angry Dad's Army troop, equipped with Molotov cocktails and old Brownings and with the force of anti-British rage making up for the missing ordnance.

Even when they started casting around for proper weaponry there was something rag-tag and Sean O'Casey about it all, with weapons being smuggled in by the dozens from America on the QE2, and FBI foot-age of republicans desperate to buy a weapon which could bring down a British helicopter.

They prosecuted their war, and they maimed and they killed, but as often as not they killed the

wrong people, or at the wrong time; their great orators said the wrong thing, their bombs took out their own people.

The series is right to start with the arrival of the troops in 1969, for other analyses of the Irish situation have suffered by being stretched to cover everything from the famine onwards. But the missing chronological context both points up the fact that this is a war fought in ancient history (not to say mythology) and that this is as comprehensible a conflict to those of us outside it as that of the Tutsis and the Hutus in Burundi.

There will be complaints. I'm certain, that in not devoting his time to demonising the terrorists, Taylor is in some way talking to support the IRA. But at a time when the Government is giving to those who talk to the IRA, he is giving the rest of us a chance to understand what the fighting has been about for all these years.

BBC1

6.00am Business Breakfast (77231)
9.25 BBC Breakfast News (1) (5671613)
9.30 Can't Cook, Won't Cook (2654960)
9.35 Style Challenge The experts give four mounted policemen a complete makeover (1492960)

9.55 Kilroy (1) (5441521)
10.35 Change That (1531347)
11.00 News (1) and weather (4803415)

11.05 Liberal Democrat Party Conference
Featuring a debate on health policies (27426250)

1.00pm News (1) and weather (82076)
3.20 Regional News (1) (17451415)

1.40 The Weather Show (873328)
1.45 Neighbours (1) (77149303)

2.10 Quirky (1) (2994417)
3.30 Through the Keyhole (7873)
3.30 Playdays (8120163) 3.50 ChuckleVision (8140927) 4.10 Get Your Own Back (4634453) 4.35 Out of Tune (6828982) 5.00 Newsround (1) (9030328) 5.10 Blue Peter (1) (5929724)

5.35 Neighbours (1) (7) (885705)
6.00 News (1) and weather (811)

6.30 Regional News (1) (163)
7.00 Animal People Peter Salis narrates a look at the world of New Zealand's penguins, allowing viewers to eavesdrop as they sneak into local discos, wake neighbours with their noise and drive people-bankers with their awful smell (1) (2182)

7.30 Tomorrow's World Philippa Forrester inspects the most technologically advanced gun yet invented, capable of firing more than a million rounds of ammunition a minute. Jez Nelson reports on a security camera that can detect smoke and act as a fire alarm (1) (347)

8.00 Crime Beat: Drugs War Martyn Lewis presents real-life police action (1) (8602)

8.30 The National Lottery Live Carol Smilie presents the draw; singer Deri Hines performs (810076)

8.45 Points of View (1) (178502)
8.55 Party Political Broadcast by the Labour Party (1) (544530)

9.00 News (1) and weather (8889)
9.25 National Lottery Update (508908)

9.30 The X Files: Telford Scully is her usual sceptical self when Mulder blames a mythical African creature for the deaths of several black men whose skin has been drained of pigment (1) (818908)

10.15 Chalk Education officer Archie Munt visits the school to investigate a financial irregularity (1) (300078)

10.45 Match of the Day: Manchester United v Chelsea Desmond Lynam presents highlights of tonight's FA Premiership encounter between the reigning champions and last season's FA Cup winners (1) (3362979)

11.50 Assassination (1987) Charles Bronson stars as a veteran secret service agent enlisted to protect the American President's wife from would-be assassins. Directed by Peter Hunt (167927)

1.15am Weather (4883080)

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BBC2

6.00am Open University: Database Developments (4431163) 6.25 Being Objective (4450298) 6.50 The Emergence of Greek Mathematics (528298)

7.15 See Hear Breakfast News (1 and signing) (4398818)

7.30 The Adventures of Skippy (6480805)

7.55 The Really Wild Show (1) (5484873) 8.20 Penny Crayon (7298219) 8.25 Tales of Aesop (741927) 8.35 Teletubbies (1066163) 9.00 Cartoon Health Show (6879279)

9.10 What? Where? When? Why? (4883347) 9.25 English Express (3859453) 9.40 Words and Pictures (858898) 10.00 Teletubbies (74589) 10.30 Numberline (3790892) 10.45 Cats' Eyes (3795347) 11.00 Around Scotland (2036057) 11.20 The Geography Programme (9001434) 11.40 Revista (7308182) 11.55 Quince Minutes Plus (823078) 12.10pm Isabel (1282908)

12.30 Working Lunch (40415) 1.00 Noddy (1) 1.10 The Craft Hour (1880304) 2.10 News (1) (3284378)

2.15 Liberal Democrat Party Conference Paddy Ashdown addresses the conference (955278)

3.55 News (1) and weather (698982) 4.00 Ready, Steady, Cook! (706) 4.30 Going, Going, Gone (682183) 4.55 Esther: servants in the 1950s (1) (5477694) 5.30 Today's the Day (540)

6.00 Star Trek: The Next Generation (1) (419250)

6.45 Conference Talk (641182)

7.30 Conjuror Shakespeare Investigation into Shakespeare's gender bias with comment from Juliet Stevenson and Fiona Shaw (1) (988)

8.00 University Challenge Exeter University v Robinson College, Cambridge (1) (6144)

8.30 The Antiques Show An aristocratic car boot sale, antique textiles, the raising value of old jeans and barometers (1) (5279)

9.00 The Nazis: A Warning from History (3) What led the Führer into conflict with Great Britain? (1) (532637)

9.50 Behind the Lines Last in series (1) (48489)

10.00 Party Political Broadcast by Labour Party (1) (14502)

10.35 Newsnight (1) (902328)

11.20 Over the Edge (783521)

11.50 The X Files (527078) 12.00 Weather 12.05am Duckman (3311309)

12.30 Learning Zone: Shaping Up (98090) 1.00 Projecting Visions (38534) 1.30 What You Never Knew About Sex (18603) 2.00 Teaching Today (95212) 4.00 Dystopia (55554) 5.00 Heart Health (69651) 5.30 A Shadow from the Past (29458)

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HTV

6.00am GMTV (7204279)
9.25 Supermarket Sweep (2650144)
9.55 Regional News (1117705)
10.00 The Time, the Place (81095)
10.30 This Morning (1892598)
12.20pm Regional News (832521)

12.30 News (1) and weather (955076)

12.55 Shortland Street (958705) 1.25 Home and Away (1) (5892336) 1.50 Remote Control Cookery (1) (7100569) 2.00 Vanessa (1) (7541025) 2.50 The Natural Health Show (6879279)

3.20 News (1) (489811)

3.25 Regional News (4868182)

3.30 Tots TV (1) (155326) 3.40 The Parkies (7381960) 3.50 The New Adventures of Winnie the Pooh (1) (874231) 4.20 Extreme Ghostbusters (1) (462570)

4.48 It's a Mystery (1) (8619144)

5.10 WALKER: Primetime Diary with Mal Pope (2467900)

5.10 Yan Can Cook: The Wonders of the World (2467900)

5.40 News (1) and weather (831811)

6.00 Home and Away (1) (889818)

6.25 HTV Weather (138144)

6.30 HTV News (1) (231)

7.00 Emmerdale Alex turns up at James's birthday party bearing gifts (1) (7250)

7.30 Coronation Street The police pay Sally a visit (1) (415)

8.00 Survival Special: Cuddly Sharks Exploring the idea that sharks may mistake people for seals the series (1) includes the Lottery result (8035)

9.00 The Ebb Tide Dramatic tale of three escapees who brave the South Seas on a plague-infested ship. With Robbie Coltrane, Steven Mackintosh and Chris Barnes. Continues after the News (1) (8231)

10.00 News at Ten (1), Lottery result and weather (18328)

10.30 Regional News (1) (310453)

10.40 The Ebb Tide Concluded (1) (478786)

11.40 WALKER: Alice The changing cultural face of Europe (1) (337250)

11.40 Hunter Double Exposure (1) (337250)

12.00am Collins and Macdonald's Movie Club (3712835)

1.10 Real Stories of the Highway Patrol (4505057)

1.35 The Swiss Conspiracy (1975) with David Jensen, as a private eye investigating the blackmailing of customers at a Swiss bank. Directed by Jack Arnold (206651)

3.10 Jones and Jury (1) (44190748) 3.30 FI: Austrian Grand Prix (1) (2017903) 4.25 Sound Bites (6484729) 4.30 The Time, the Place (1) (87455) 5.00 Coronation Street (1) (63477) 5.30 News (48212)

7.30 Conjuror Shakespeare Investigation into Shakespeare's gender bias with comment from Juliet Stevenson and Fiona Shaw (1) (988)

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SPEEDWAY 45

Elder statesman
defies odds to
reach landmark

SPORT

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 24 1997

FOOTBALL 49

Given achieves
his goal at
St James' Park



Course provides demanding challenge for Ryder Cup rivals Teams negotiate learning curve

FROM JOHN HOPKINS
GOLF CORRESPONDENT
AT VALDEERRAMA

THE talk subsided here yesterday and was replaced by the crack of club on ball as first Europe and then the United States began to familiarise themselves with the routes and rhythms of the Continent's most distinctive golf course. There is plenty for the competitors in the Ryder Cup to learn about Valderrama.

At this course, not far from Gibraltar, there are cork trees overhanging greens and in bunkers, as well as one slap bang in the middle of a fairway. This is not to mention tiny shards of crushed granite in the bunkers that give off a dazzling light.

Hardly had darkness lifted



RYDER CUP '97

Lynne Truss

than Thomas Bjorn was expressing the mood of the 24 competitors, newcomers and old hands alike. "It's a great feeling to be here at last," Bjorn, who is making his debut, said. "It has been a long way to get here. This is where we want to be. We want to get on with it. There's no running home to mum now."

Severiano Ballesteros, the Europe captain, paired each rookie with a player who has appeared in at least one Ryder Cup. Nick Faldo and Ignacio Garrido halved with the Swedes, Per-Ulrik Johansson and Jesper Parnevik. José María Olazábal and Costantino Rocca beat Darren Clarke and Colin Montgomerie 3 and 2, and Bjorn and Bernhard Langer were five up after eight holes against Ian Woosnam and Lee Westwood and eventually won 2 and 1.

Ballesteros made light of having had only four hours' sleep and moved around happily in a buggy. He liked what he saw. Even when he came across Woosnam in the trees he made a joke of it. "What are you doing here?" he asked. "You're playing like me."



Woods, the American who produced some massive hitting on the first day of practice, plays to the 10th yesterday. Photograph: Steve Munday/Allsport

Considerable time was spent on the 4th and the 17th, the more teasing of the three par-fives. A westerly wind was blowing, making the 4th downwind, and though the green is protected by a waterfall to the right and one bunker which has a tree in it to the left, Clarke could not resist the temptation to go for it.

He hit a two-iron and reached the putting surface. This is big hitting on a 535-

yard hole, but not as big as Tiger Woods, who some hours later smashed his ball onto the green with a five-iron. His ball ended 12 feet from the flag.

The 17th was more troublesome. Montgomerie has described it as the worst hole in Europe, which could be interpreted as irreverence as it was partly designed by Ballesteros. There is a strip of rough running across the fairway 200 yards from the tee, and the green, which slopes from back to front, is subtly contoured. If that is not enough, there is a pond in front of the green, which attracts golf balls as moths are drawn to a candle.

Mark O'Meara is not a great one for stretches of rough across the middle of the fairway and when his ball trickled onto the green and got caught in a gully that swept it down into the sentinel pond, he did not care much for that, either. "The course is in perfect condition," O'Meara said. "Playing from the fairways is like hitting off carpets." But he questioned the need for gimmicks.

Last Sunday, Olazábal was downcast about his golf. Everything was wrong with it, he said, and the safest place for his mother to watch him from this week would be the middle of the fairway. Ballesteros grinned when he heard reports that Olazábal was playing badly. "José María

was not very good today," Ballesteros said, with heavy sarcasm. "He was only about five under par after eight holes."

John Jacobs, the Europe captain in 1979 and 1981, is the man who helps Olazábal with his swing. Jacobs kept an eye on him for most of his round. "I watched him and he played beautifully," Jacobs reported, a smile on his face as if he had heard Olazábal talk that way before. "He gets very down on himself. He can be a bloody awful putter, except on really fast greens, but there is nothing wrong with him."

Ballesteros has shuffled most of his players slightly for practice today. Bjorn moves to partner Montgomerie and

Garrido and Clarke, two rookies, will have a trial run together. Faldo will play with Westwood and Langer with Woosnam. "There is no great secret to doing the pairings," Ballesteros said. "I try to make sure they feel comfortable with one another, are relaxed, full of confidence."

The most confident pair at Valderrama last night were Tom Lehman and Phil Mickelson, who had played Jim Furyk and Jeff Maggert. Lehman was asked what he thought of the course he saw for the first time this week. "I liked it a lot today," the former Open champion said. "I got paid. We took \$120 from Furyk and Maggert."

It is not only the players who will be under scrutiny; the game on Saturday will be handled by Gordon Black, from Ireland, a referee who has yet to establish a reputation in international terms.

Unhappy Brive set for warm welcome

By DAVID HANDS
RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

PONTYPRIDD will play their Heineken Cup match with Brive, the holders, at Sardis Road on Saturday, knowing that their every action will be under the microscope. "It would be extremely damaging to Pontypridd if there is trouble," Eddie Jones, the Welsh club's rugby manager, said. "It could finish us."

It is a message that Pontypridd will try to drum home to their supporters after they and Brive were each fined £30,000 by the board of European Rugby Cup Ltd (ERC), the tournament organisers. The fine, imposed after the violent confrontation between the clubs in Brive on September 14, has been split, half to be paid within 21 days and half at the end of the season, while Dale McIntosh, the No 8 sent off along with Lionel Mallier, of Brive, during the game, is to be charged with bringing the competition into disrepute.

The reaction of Patrick Sebastian, the Brive president, was one of incredulity. "It is a shameful and disgusting decision," he said, accusing ERC of confusing violence on the pitch with the bar-room brawl between players and supporters that followed later the same night. However, he confirmed that his club would fulfil the fixture, though he will urge Brive supporters not to travel to Wales.

Pontypridd were more phlegmatic. "We accept the findings of the ERC panel," Cenydd Thomas, the chief executive, and, like Jones, a former policeman, said. "We have been dealt with in the context of the match and we are delighted the return will be played at Sardis Road."

That would have been the most unfair punishment of all if they had decided the game should be played at an alternative venue. There will be a sensible level of policing, allied to efficient stewarding.

Both clubs realise just how serious any repetition of violence, on or off the field, could be. "To be expelled from the tournament would be a massive blow, not just financially but in terms of our credibility," Jones said.

It is not only the players who will be under scrutiny; the game on Saturday will be handled by Gordon Black, from Ireland, a referee who has yet to establish a reputation in international terms.

DANNY BAKER ON FOOTBALL



LAWRENCE DALLAGLIO ON RUGBY



SIMON BARNES ON HORSE



NEW COLUMNS THIS SATURDAY THE TIMES UNDER THE SKIN OF SPORT

Martin gives peace a chance

Mel Webb on an unexpected settlement to the dispute that divided Europe

IT WAS like the dance-hall from hell with added suitcases. Enthusiasm was thick in the warm Spanish air; business or pleasure was on people's minds as they moved through the steps of a stately if slightly disorganised gavotte in search of their luggage. And there, amid the hustle and bustle, sat a man who had had his invitation to the ball withdrawn. He was sitting this one out.

It was Monday evening at Malaga airport and the man with apparently no business, or pleasure, to look forward to was Miguel Angel Martin, and he cut a poignant figure as he guarded his suitcase.

The suitcase should have contained the polychrome regalia of one of the aristocrats of European golf: the uniform of the Ryder Cup player. For months Martin had expected to be a part of this, only for the frailties of his own body and the clinical and necessarily heartless decision of a committee to take it away.

Martin, a small, dark man from Hueva, close to the border with Portugal, was a picture of dejection as he watched the faces of the incoming passengers. They were smiling, and so, in other

circumstances, would he have been, but there was not much room for cheer in his life. His body language was that of a man who did not quite know where he was, or what he was doing there.

Martin injured his wrist in July, had an operation and was then summarily dropped from the team after refusing to take a fitness test. At 35, he is an honest yeoman who has never been a contender for golf's great prizes, and the suspicion is that he knows



Martin: rapprochement

that there might not be another chance. He had played his way into tenth place on the qualifying list, and if he was not to play, he would like to have made the decision for himself.

From there the matter took an ugly turn: lawyers were consulted on both sides, there was talk of litigation, spokesmen on the opposition benches almost refused, ostrich-like, to admit that he existed.

Severiano Ballesteros, the captain, who, when Martin challenged his exclusion, responded by saying with brutal honesty that Martin had not been welcome before and was certainly not welcome now, refused to speak of him on Monday.

When asked again yesterday to comment on the matter, he refused, stony-faced, to do so.

In the midst of such bitterness, there seemed no chance of a negotiated settlement when Martin went into a meeting yesterday afternoon with Ken Schofield, the executive director of the PGA

European Tour, Richard Hills, the Ryder Cup director, and Pedro Cardelus, the vice-president of the Spanish Golf Federation. They talked for an hour, and the resulting rapprochement was as unexpected as it was remarkable. Schofield, who will hold a press conference this morning, did not comment, but Martin did.

"It's over, and I am happy," he said. "I am here for the week. I am a member of the team. I'm even in the next room to Seve, and I will be going to see him straight away."

Cardelus, who was present on Martin's behalf, said: "Miguel is morally re-established in the team. He is now looking to the future and not the past." So he might be, but in these coming days Martin will be in the piece but not of it, a man without a mission beyond the waving of a flag.

Face has been saved on both sides, but Martin knows that the mere wearing of a blazer and a room next to the captain does not make him a member of a team from which he has been rejected and ejected. He has been let into the hall of fame; but what is the point of that if he cannot dance?

Forest in plea for European place

By ROB HUGHES

THERE is good news, and bad, for Nottingham Forest in their attempts to gain compensation for their defeat in the 1984 UEFA Cup semi-final when Anderlecht, their opponents, bribed the referee.

Former Forest players, including Steve Hodge and Paul Hart, who had a goal disallowed, will find that there is no legal action they can take for lost earnings in the criminal courts, either in Belgium or Switzerland, where Uefa has its headquarters. Neither country recognises "sporting fraud" as a crime.

However, Forest's lawyers believe that they can win in excess of £1.5 million in damages through civil court action, particularly now that Uefa has fully admitted that Anderlecht paid Guruseta

Muro, the Spanish referee, about £20,000 after the second leg of the tie in which the Belgian club recovered from 2-0 down to win 3-2 on aggregate.

Yesterday, Uefa confirmed that Raymond De Deken, the club liaison officer who made the payment to the referee, is *persona non grata*, unwelcome at any level in football on the Continent. Constant Van den Stock, the former Anderlecht chairman, who admitted in a civil court that he arranged the payment, is beyond Uefa reproach now that he is not in the game.

Anderlecht have been banned from the next European season for which they qualify and Forest yesterday came up with an inventive plea. They want to be granted the place of Anderlecht the next time that the Belgian club does qualify.

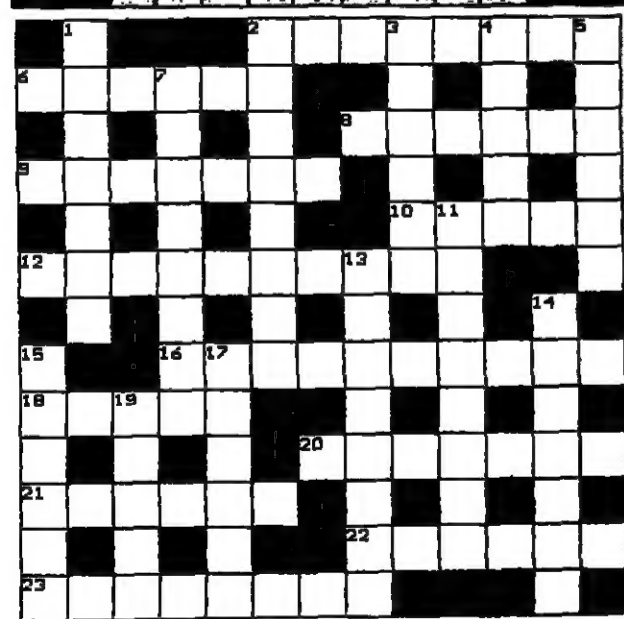
Lennart Johansson, the president of Uefa, admitted that the ban would victimise Belgian players who were not old enough to be involved in 1984. "As always, somebody suffers," Johansson said.

"But we think the ban is a fair one, it is not a legal punishment but an ethical and moral. It leaves us for the moment with the problem of Nottingham Forest; they are the victims."

Johansson is trying to discover why a package from the Belgian FA, addressed to him in 1992, was not handed to him until a few days ago. "We know about the bribery, we now have to clarify the internal situation at Uefa," he said.

Brian Glanville, page 48
Given's goal, page 49

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1207

ACROSS

- 2 Of the Milky Way (8)
- 6 Bargain over price (6)
- 8 NT book after Acts (6)
- 9 Quakers (7)
- 10 Find answer to (problem) (5)
- 12 Fellow-citizens; rusties (10)
- 16 Spa, Gold Cup town (10)
- 18 Adorn; (troop) battle-order (5)
- 20 (Fr.) sweet roll (7)
- 21 Altitude (6)
- 22 — Hitchcock, Lord Tennyson (6)
- 23 Contemptuous (8)

DOWN

- 1 Lower of own land (7)
- 2 Fr. policeman (8)
- 3 Evolve; stir up (6)
- 4 Be behind; rough track (5)
- 5 Jewel box (6)
- 7 Basque town, Picasso painting (8)
- 11 Occasionally (2,3,3)
- 13 Stuff; relevant (8)
- 14 Teller; expel in disgrace (7)
- 15 Anti-climax (6)
- 17 Punctuation in last clue (6)
- 19 Indian or white animal (5)

SOLUTION TO NO 1206

- ACROSS: 7 Beggar's Opera 9 Ailment 10 Gourd
11 Esau 12 Gyraton 15 Headless 17 Puff 19 Valet
21 Lourdes 22 If the cap fits
- DOWN: 1 Tell-tale 2 Agley 3 Pretty 4 Congeal 5 Peru
6 Hazard-fast 8 Take the veil 13 Inaudible 14 Flutter
16 Salaam 18 Quiff 20 Let

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